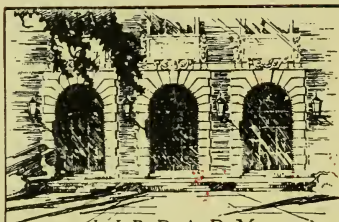


THE BAN
OF MAPLETHORPE



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E.H.DERING



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THE BAN
OF MAPLETHORPE

BY

E. H. DERING

With a

MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR

VOL. II.



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NEW YORK, CINCINNATI, CHICAGO: BENZIGER BROS.

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Page 10 of Memoir

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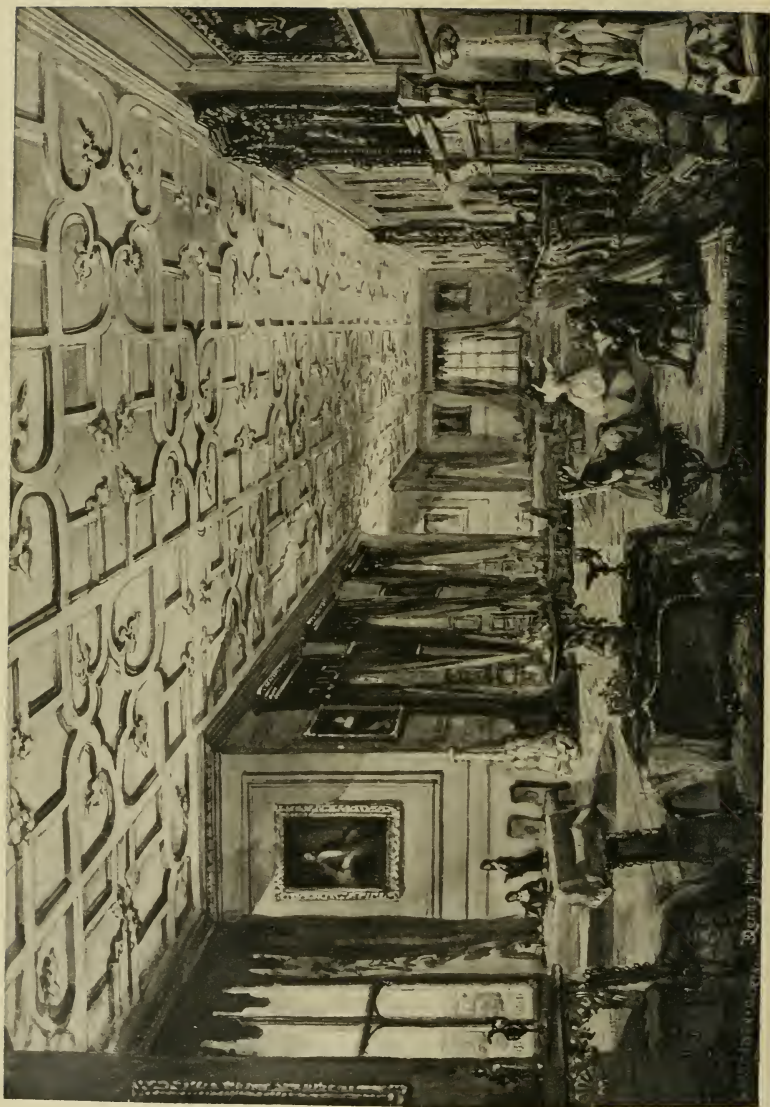
VOL. II.

THE GALLERY AT SURRENDEN DERING, from a
water-colour sketch by Mrs. Ferrers, (afterwards
Mrs. Dering - - - *Frontispiece Vol. II*

THE HALL AT BADDESLEY CLINTON, with portraits,
from a small oil painting by Mrs. Dering. On
the right, Mr. Ferrers is reading a passage out of
the book held in his hand, to Mr. Dering, who is
listening critically. Georgiana Lady Chatterton
is writing at a distant table, and Mrs. Dering
(then Mrs. Ferrers) in a riding habit is putting
flowers into a vase - - - *Memoir, p. 1*

"THE SQUIRE'S EVENING WALK," from a portrait
in oils of MARMION E. FERRERS. • By the
same - - - - - *Memoir, p. 14*

"THE PHILOSOPHER'S EVENING WALK," from a
portrait in oils of EDWARD H. DERING. By the
same - - - - - *Memoir, p. 22*





CHAPTER XXXIX.

WHAT HAPPENED WHILE TWERLEBY WAS GETTING OUT OF THE WAY, HIS RIVAL REMAINING IN HIS WAY AND THE BARONESS DIABOLOUSKI MAKING HER WAY AT MAPLETHORPE.



FEW days afterwards, the Baroness Diabolouski, having come to Maplethorpe in the quality of a guest invited for a fortnight, who, by reason of another engagement, could only stay there ten days, was manifesting herself in such an attractive way that no one except Monica Greswolde could see any harm in her.

On the ninth day, finding (of course) that her friend elsewhere would not be inconvenienced by a postponement of a week, she put off that imaginary visit, put on by imperceptible degrees a more intimate manner with the Pearl, and put aside every distinction between them, so that after a while, they strangely appeared to be of one mind. The other visit was again postponed; and then her friend would be having her house full for a fortnight and perhaps longer. The friend's house remained full, and the Baroness remained at Maplethorpe, till the lengthened visit was no longer distinguishable from residence. Twerleby was of course not there, nor intended to be there in company with her. He made engagements till the middle of Lent; and then—remembering that he had never been to Norway, nor ever looked on the plains of India from the Himalayas, nor ever hunted Kangaroos in Australia, nor ever studied the practical working of the revolver system in Kansas—he set

out for Paris and elsewhere—on Tuesday in Easter week, dividing his attention between the progressiveness of truth and the aggressive progressiveness of the Baroness Diabolouski. He repeatedly promised himself, as before, to make her disappear, but in fact he was getting out of her way, and she was making her way.

About the same time, that is, in Easter week, Oswald, having come to Cubton after a very pressing and oft-repeated invitation, was riding to the meet at Grumley Green, mounted on one of Mr. Blastmore's horses. Grumley Green was two miles the other side of Maplethorpe; and Mr. Blastmore, as a neighbour, had been given the privilege of going through the park. Bramsby wished that he were not going that way, or at least, not with anyone, and even tried to wish that he had never been there.

"Yes," he thought, "I wish that I could wish it, but I cannot command my will in that. . . . If I could, I should be not myself, or she would not be what she is. The possibility of so wishing is precluded by the need."

"What do you think of this animal that I'm on?" said Mr. Blastmore. "I haven't bought him yet."

Bramsby roused himself by a strong yet imperceptible effort and cast a rapid glance at the horse. "I like him well enough," he said, "but not for you. He is not up to your weight. Do change horses with me. He is not fit to carry you across country."

"He'll do for to-day," said Mr. Blastmore. "I said I'd try him."

"But did you see him beforehand?"

"No, but I'll send him back. We can change horses by and by, if he can't carry me."

"Yes, but suppose that he gives you a bad tumble first."

"Well, I must give him a bit of a trial."

"No, not after seeing him. He can't carry you safely over a fence."

"Well, I'll think about it," said Mr. Blastmore, beginning to trot. "I shall see how he feels under me."

"All right till we get to the cover-side," said Bramsby; "but I hope that you won't wait afterwards to see how you feel under *him*."

They trotted on gently, making occasional remarks while

Bramsby thought in his own way according to his own circumstances.

"Yes," he thought, reverting to his last unspoken word, "the possibility of wishing that is precluded by the need; but I can wish perhaps that I were not going that way: yet of what use would that be? I can neither think of her, nor think of her otherwise than as I do, nor think of her without remembering how she is surrounded. Lady Rossden is a fool, Twerleby is a scoundrel, and the Baroness Diabolouski just what I took her to be when I first saw her. Lady Rossden could persuade herself in favour of anyone who would anyhow keep the daughter of a Catholic father away from the Church of God. The Baroness is of course ready and waiting. Twerleby would do anything except a good deed, and say anything for his own advantage except his prayers. Malmaines, one of the very best and most interesting men that I ever knew, and accurate in his measurements of men and things, was deceived about that man strangely. I have suspicions, but I cannot verify them; and if I could, what then? I am as helpless as she is. Human help is out of the question. If I had nothing more than natural religion, or heretical religiosity, I should either go mad, or settle my account with that man in some lonely place. I certainly should, though I should be the same man that I am now and have the same natural disposition. Yet people gravely tell us that they can be kept straight by a general religiosity."

They were now in the Park; and Mr. Blastmore having finished his thinking with a conditional conclusion, said suddenly,

"I hate passing through the place now, only it saves a mile and a half, and we're a bit late, because I was talking so at breakfast about all sorts of things. D—n it! I can't bear to see the place—I wish we had gone round by Abbot's Wood. Malmaines was a brick. A better man than he was in every way never rode or drove—only he would not have driven to cover like these nosegay sportsmen, who had better be hairdressers, and be d—n to 'em! a better man, I say, and stick to it, and always will stick to it if I have to kick the Emperor of all the Russias to prove my word—a better man never rode to any meet, from John o' Groat's House to the Land's End. But it's my

opinion that he was taken in, not as that comfortable ass, old Bundleton, finds in his thick head;—d—n it! I know better than that, and I know what he's made of—but it's that nephew, Twerleby. I only met him once, and that was when he rode over me at a gap and tumbled off because he couldn't sit. Mark my words. He's at the bottom of what's going on at Maplethorpe now. Do you know they've got that Baroness Devilwhiskey in the house?"

"I have heard that," said Bramsby, showing no signs of anything except willingness to answer.

"She's a friend of his, you know," said Mr. Blastmore, "and it is my belief that he got her there because he's up to something—I don't know what, but I'm sure it's all wrong. You know him, don't you?"

"I met him here three months ago," said Bramsby, "and once afterwards."

"And how do you like him?"

"Well—to say the truth, strictly between ourselves,—I never liked him at all, and I now dislike him very much, for I think, as you do, that he brought in the Baroness Diabolouski, when he *must* know that his uncle (one of the best of men) would never have allowed it. He *must* know that, and he *must* know what she is. I can hardly trust myself to speak of those two. But it won't do to say so. You could do no good and only get yourself into trouble."

"Well—I suppose you're right," said Mr. Blastmore, "but its d—d hard, I feel it so especially now, d—n it; for I remember catching sight of you and the Pearl of Maplethorpe, as they call her, at that ball last winter, standing in the room near together, tho' I don't think you were dancing, and I thought what a deuced nice couple you'd make. But I don't believe they'd ever let you inside; and why! there she is—the devil in petticoats coming out the house. Look there! She turned away when she caught sight of us; she's at something, I'll swear: but what the devil is it? I can't see my way, can you?"

"I can," thought Bramsby, "for she is cunning enough to have found out, or guessed, who the lady was that I saved from drowning: and now she has seen me with the same lady's uncle. What use will she make of that?"

Before he had reached the further lodge, the Baroness

was preparing to answer the question in a practical way. She went into the shrubbery, where she knew the Pearl to be, and meeting her in an accidental manner said,

“So they are fox-hunting still?”

“Yes, till the end of this month,” said the Pearl, wearily. “Have you seen the hounds?”

“No, but I saw Mr. Blastmore, in a red coat and top boots, riding by. Is there a right of way?”

“No. He comes by privilege as a neighbour.”

“I see. What a nice neighbourly feeling there is between the landed proprietors in Ilsetshire. How could it be otherwise in your dear father’s county—the best man that I ever knew!”

Having said these last words with well simulated emotion to gain the confidence of the Pearl, she added a remark in an absent manner, as if she were thinking aloud.

“The gentleman who was with him,” she said very distinctly, in a tremulous voice, “is not a neighbour. His place is a long way from here.”

“Perhaps he was a friend staying with him,” said the Pearl; “or, more probably, some one in the neighbourhood who was late for the meet at Grumley Green, and came with him. He seldom has anyone staying with him. He had a disappointment long ago, and lived by himself, except when his niece was with him. But she went away—I don’t know where.”

“How small the world seems to be sometimes in our own experience of it!” said the Baroness. “It so happens that, wherever she may be now, I *do* know about her leaving Cubton. She quarrelled with her uncle, or her uncle quarrelled with her, or they quarrelled with each other, about something—a marriage, I think, she said—and she ran away, and then asked me to help her. I tried to help her; but what could I do for a poor girl who went away so? I recommended her to some people in Paris, as a companion who could teach English. But I wish that I had never seen her; she was deceived by a false marriage and came back to England, to the coast of Ilsetshire, near Hunterscombe, and then threw herself into the sea. She was rescued; and the rescue made people think and wonder. I have been told by people who seemed to know all about it, that the man who pulled her out of the sea, was the same

man who had been seen with her at the terminus in Paris, paying for her journey to England : and moreover, people do say, that he was the man who had married her and then deserted her. I always incline to disbelieve reports, but there *was* a mystery about her, and she was in great distress of mind when seen at the terminus. Moreover, the man who paid her fare did *not* travel in the same carriage ; but he must have followed her afterwards or she followed him, for otherwise how could he have been just at the right time and place to pull her out of the sea ? They say that she had followed him ; and it seems likely, because that place is very near Hunterscombe."

"Who then was he ?" said the Pearl, fixing her eyes on the grass.

"Oswald Bramsby," answered the Baroness ; "and yet he was riding with her uncle. The rest remains to be seen : his estate is heavily mortgaged, and Mr. Blastmore took up the mortgages himself. He has plenty of money—his father made it in some sort of trade."

"Then," said the Pearl with unnatural calmness, "I shall never again believe in anyone—*no, not in anyone.*"

She turned away decisively, leaving the Baroness in a state of limited satisfaction. The words "No, not in *anyone*," were not favourable to her own chance of influence ; but, at least, she had taken vengeance on Oswald Bramsby.

In the meanwhile, a fox was found in the gorse at Grumley Green, and Mr. Blastmore said, "D—n it, I *must* give the horse a bit of a trial, we can change afterwards."

"I wouldn't, if I were you," said Sir Henry Melford, riding up to them. "He isn't up to your weight."

"All right," said Mr. Blastmore, "we're off now."


The result was that at the second fence the horse fell heavily, and his rider fell under him. Oswald and Sir Henry Melford, who had taken the fence at the same time, jumped off while the horse was beginning to scramble up.

"You were right," said Mr. Blastmore in a faint voice. "I'm badly hurt."

"I had better ride to Maplethorpe," said Sir Henry, "and ask for a carriage, while you take care of him. I see a doctor coming."



CHAPTER XL.

FOR Mr. Blastmore was, as he had said, badly hurt; and more hurt than he had supposed. He was in great pain, had a very restless night and showed no signs of improvement, but rather became worse. When exhaustion and a sleeping draught had made him sleep till late in the evening, he felt better comparatively. On the fourth day the doctor thought that with care the injuries would not be permanent: but when asked how long it would be necessary to be in bed, he said: "Don't ask me yet. I can't give an opinion so soon. If you keep quiet and calm, you will do much to shorten it."

This he said with emphasis, more than once, knowing the character of his patient; but, in fact, the advice was not needed. Mr. Blastmore, under the influence of Oswald Bramsby, who nursed him almost night and day, obeyed the doctor's orders without a murmur, so that all who witnessed his patience were astonished, because that kind-hearted man, whom they valued much as himself precisely, had hitherto been given to expressing sudden objections in objectionable words. When the doctor recommended quiet and patience, Oswald said, "He has been as quiet and patient as possible;" and Mr. Blastmore added, "I should never have been so without you."

The doctor then went away, and Mr. Blastmore said, "Yes, I couldn't have done it without you, I'll be d—d if I could. There's a something about you that lays hold of me. If you go to London, I shan't be able to keep quiet."

I shall be a nuisance to myself and everyone else, I shall Couldn't you stay on a bit?"

"I would, if it were possible. But I am wanted in London. I promised to be back at the office by Monday at latest."

"If that's all," said Mr. Blastmore, "the thing can easily be settled. I was going to speak about that last evening, but we were talking so about other things that I didn't. I have been thinking when I was lying awake here, night after night, and you so good to me, and breaking your rest for me—by George, I never remember anything like it, since my poor mother nursed me through scarlet fever when I was a boy—yes, I was thinking, as I lay here, not up to anything, of all you and yours have done for me. You remember (don't you?) what I said at Hunterscombe about my obligations to your grandfather, and—"

"I do," said Oswald, "but my obligations to you are quite out of proportion to that."

"No, no: it wasn't so at all. If you say it again, I'll put it all down in black and white and have it printed and sent all about. Now the long and short of it is this. I have been thinking the whole thing over and I'm not satisfied; for the mortgages are there, and the mortgages mean paying out what ought to be coming in. So I'm going to make myself feel comfortable—hang it, I've a right to do that—and pay off the lot, so that you can drop the lawyerizing which doesn't suit you at all, and keeps you away from your place. Do give it up. You must promise me that you will. Now don't make a row. I can afford it and live as well as before, for I never spend half my income, and have plenty for Gertrude, more than the minx has any right to expect—I'm not going to cut her off, though she did play me a shabby trick. Now give me a pen and ink and help me to write it. I want to say that I make over to you by deed of gift the mortgages which I hold on your estate, and get old Bottles and the stud-groom to come up and witness it"

"Hadn't you better put it off until you are better?" said Oswald; "you were to keep quiet, you know."

"That's just it; if I write it now and make all secure, in case of accidents, my mind *will* be quiet—and it won't otherwise, don't you see? Here, give me the paper, and

ring for them. You can see that it is legally done, and then my lawyer shall draw up a more formal document and return the title deeds of your estate to you."

When the paper had been duly written, signed and witnessed, Mr. Blastmore said to Oswald, "Take it and lock it up. And now, *do* write at once, and give up the lawyerizing. And say you can't be in London at present. Then write for me to my lawyer. Tell him what I wish him to do about the mortgages and returning your deeds to you. I can't talk any more just now, I'm so sleepy. Only say that you will write those two letters."

"I will write them now," said Oswald, "and say the rest when you have had your sleep."

He left the room, wrote the letters, and then went out to breathe some fresh air, while thinking at leisure of what had happened so suddenly.

Cubton was a square house of red brick, with a big stable-yard on the further side, a kitchen garden just behind it, and a narrow shrubbery of larch and laurels in front, encircling the carriage drive.

"This wonderful kindness of Mr. Blastmore's," he thought, as he walked up and down the drive, "puts me strangely in contradiction with myself—strangely and painfully. The old property that I love so much, and for which I made myself an absentee, working at a work that I disliked, has been set free in a way that would have seemed incredible before the fact. Six months ago I should have felt completely content; but now I can only feel grateful beyond measure. I can and I do rejoice as myself; but not for myself, nor *in* myself. To remain here—and I must remain here, I know not how long—will involve the necessity of calling at Maplethorpe, and seeing her, perhaps, in the presence of—"

The next words in his thinking were the "Baroness Diabolouski," who interrupted him by appearing in one of her many characters before he could take refuge anywhere. She came alone, in a Victoria, and gracefully descending its low steps, approached him in the manner of a sympathizing friend.

"How is the poor invalid?" she said. "I am afraid that he has suffered very much."

"He has," answered Oswald; "but he is doing well now."

"I am truly glad," said she, "to hear such a good account of him. I only hope that he will not feel the effects of it afterwards."

"The doctor," said Oswald, "thinks that he will quite get over it, with time and care."

"How fortunate," said she, "that you have been with him! What *would* he do without you? But your duties in London, I fear, will compel you to leave him too soon."

"About that," said Bramsby, "I must do my best, according to the circumstances of the case."

"We can't do more than that," said she; "and, after all, if we could make our own circumstances, we should make them worse than they are."

"I am afraid," said he, "that many of us do a great deal in that way, and afterwards complain of our own work."

"Many do indeed," she said; and the expression of her countenance was thoughtful, with a touch of sadness in it. "They do indeed, and then lay the blame on others. There is nothing more characteristic of human nature as it is. But I mustn't let myself be tempted to go on with our pleasant and interesting talk, or I shall be late for luncheon, and put out Lady RosSDen's arrangements; for I am going a long drive with her this afternoon. Good-bye."

"Good-bye," echoed Oswald, handing her into the Victoria.

She then drove away, and he walked away in the opposite direction, saying to himself, "If I had not known her before, she would have taken me in."

He walked on, thinking much, but not of her, except as a probable and hideous impediment between himself and the Pearl. The death of Malmaines had changed their relative positions, how much he knew not. There was a mystery about that, and he was sure of it; but he knew no more, nor had he any means of knowing, unless he could hear or, in some way, infer it from her.

"I cannot endure this any longer," he thought. "I cannot, and I ought not. I must and will see her."



CHAPTER XLI.



THE following day was Sunday ; and early in the morning, Mr. Blastmore sent for Oswald, saying, when he came in, "I have ordered the mail phaeton to take you to the Catholic Church in Osmundsbury."

"Thank you very much," said Oswald, "but I can't leave you for so long."

"That's very kind, but I thought you were under an obligation to go."

"Yes, but care of the sick takes precedence, not only in the world, but also in monasteries. The Rule of St. Benedict says : *Infirmorum cura ante omnia et super omnia adhibenda est.*"

"What does that mean ? I have forgotten my latin."

"It means that every duty, except the duty of loving and serving God, must give way to the duty of attending on the sick."

Mr. Blastmore uttered an inarticulate sound of approbation, paused awhile in thought, and then raising himself on his pillow, said :

"D—n it !—no, I didn't mean to say that—but I begin to think that your's is the true Church."

"You will end by being quite sure of it," said Oswald. "A man so straightforward as you are would never let go such a question—the most important of all possible questions—till he had satisfied himself about it."

"I *must* be satisfied about it, one way or the other," said Mr. Blastmore ; "and I won't put it off. I've sense enough to know that it is just everything. But now, suppose that you had been brought up a Protestant, and, like me, didn't

quite know what you in a sort of way believed, how should you go to work?"

"I should begin," said Oswald, "by asking myself what Almighty God is, and what we human beings are, and how we stand in relation to God. I should ask myself those three questions, one after the other, just as if I knew nothing about God, because the best way of working out a question is to begin from the beginning."

"That's it," said Mr. Blastmore. "It's common sense. Well then, how would you work it out?"

"You will work it out for yourself," said Oswald. "When we speak of God, we don't mean an unknown and unknowable something, that, as far as we are concerned, might as well not be. Do we?"

"Hang it, no," said Mr. Blastmore; "that wouldn't be God. And then where should *we* be, with nothing to look for beyond this contradictory world, where we are growing older every day and never quite satisfied?"

"But how can He be sufficiently knowable," said Oswald, "except through some divinely appointed authority here? He is not visibly present, nor does He teach us by inspiration. If there is no visible Church, the world is worse off than before the Redemption; for His chosen people had one, as the Bible testifies."

"I never thought of that," said Mr. Blastmore. "But it's true. There's no denying it."

"Then," said Oswald, "you have got as far as a visible Church, divinely appointed—haven't you?"

"Yes, I've got to that."

"Then you can't believe the Church to be the sum of all the contradictory religions that are called Christian. That can't be the visible Church of God Who is Truth—can it?"

"No," said Mr. Blastmore, with much emphasis. "They all swear against each other. That's the congregation of faithful men that old Bundleton talks about, whenever he gets a chance. *That* won't do."

"Can you," said Oswald, "believe in the Branch theory, according to which the Catholic Church, the Russo-Greek Church, and the Established Church (which teaches all sort of doctrines) make up the One True Church, as branches whose trunk is nowhere?"

"I can't," said Mr. Blastmore.

"Can it then," said Oswald, "be the Anglican Established Church only? or the Russo-Greek Church only? Does either show any signs of being the One True Church, divinely founded and authorized?"

"No, it does not."

"Can you find it in any of the churches or sects that set up for themselves?"

"No, I can't."

"Well then, since you cannot find it in any of these, individually or collectively, while you are sure nevertheless that there *is* a Church of God, there is nothing left for you to choose but the Catholic Church."

"I saw that," said Mr. Blastmore, "when you were talking about those rotten branches cut away from the trunk. I'm not a scholar, and I never thought of these things before: but I've got a little common sense, and I can see that such talk is rot. The branches can't make up the Church of God, any more than the congregation of faithful men all about, believing as they like."

"Just so. And moreover you find in the Catholic Church all that you would expect to find in the Church of God."

"I shall have to be a Catholic, I see," said Mr. Blastmore; "but I'm not up to it yet, though I want it. You can't think how hard it is to get out of what one was taught by one's mother."

"If your case were mine," said Oswald, "I should feel just as you do. The answer is, that if your parents had seen the question as you see it, they would have done what you are doing."

"I hadn't thought of that," said Mr. Blastmore. "Yes, I'm sure they would. It's all the fault of those beastly reformers. I hate reformers. They always mean mischief. Well then, I'll rest a bit after all this; for I am rather done up. I'm not fit for much yet. I should like to talk it over with your good uncle, Father Bramsby. Suppose you write and ask him to come? The man who brings the letters here on Sunday morning would take yours to the post."

Oswald wrote the letter, and went after a while to breakfast. Sir Henry Melford was then doing likewise at Blum-bury, where he had at last engaged himself to Charlotte

Amelia : and so was the Baroness Diabolouski at Mapletorpe. The Baroness produced a supposed letter from her pocket that said : "Mr. Bramsby is domiciled at Cubton, which looks like a marriage, because Mr. Blastmore's niece will have money. Moreover the sale of Hunterscombe has been stopped. If you put all this together, you will only come to one conclusion."

"One can't be surprised," said she, when she had read the supposed letter aloud to Lady Rossden and the Pearl. "He *was* in such difficulties you know."





CHAPTER XLII.



IF a rat with a wall behind him flies at his pursuer, as in fact he does, a man pressed, as Oswald was, would certainly risk a snubbing reception from Lady Rossden, in order to see the Pearl and learn, directly or indirectly, how he stood in relation to her.

"I *must* know that," he said to himself on Monday morning. All depends on that. Lady Rossden's reign will come to an end; and after all, she is not dealing with a child, nor is she in the quality of a parent. I must call there to day as early as I may."

About two o'clock he mounted one of Mr. Blastmore's horses and slowly rode towards Maplethorpe. When he approached the place, he rode still more slowly; for the impediments were growing and multiplying in his mind. "Why should I imagine in this way?" he thought. "How can my coming near affect anything?" I will *not* be a fool and a weak fool, when I may, and probably shall, have the utmost need of my wits."

This advice to himself was very good in itself, but quite ineffectual to him. "It would serve," he thought, "if the question pending were any other; but not now." He then made a short aspiration and cantered up to the door.

When the door was opened, he said of course, "Is Lady Rossden at home?" hoping to hear that she was not at home, because then he could ask whether the Pearl was at home. "I have a right," he thought, "to do that, after the intimate friendship that there was between her father and myself: and especially when I remember what he said

that last evening—the last time that we were together. Lady Rossden has no right of any sort whatever to interfere.

Lady Rossden was at home: but would he see the Pearl? “Now, or soon,” he said to himself, “I *will* see her.” Lady Rossden, who had just been telling herself that he should not be admitted if he called, knowing that he was in the neighbourhood was filled with what she called “righteous indignation,” when told that he had come and had been shown into the library.

“Why did you let him in?” she said to the butler, raising her voice incautiously. “I told you not to do so. If he ever calls here again, we are not at home—not anybody—mind that. We are not at home to him—not at home, ever.”

It happened that she was then sitting in a small room the door of which opened into the library, and was indeed, unknown to her, a little bit open. Oswald could not avoid hearing the words, and said to himself, “this is worse than I expected. But the event will not depend on her.”

Lady Rossden, bent on making herself as unpleasant as possible without being rude, came slowly into the room, looking stiff and interrogative, as if she were asking herself who he was and why he had come.

“I have sent every day,” she said, “to enquire how Mr. Blastmore was going on.”

“I am aware of that,” said Oswald, “and I thank you for him: but I have not come to give a *bulletin* of his health. I called here, as in duty bound, being in the neighbourhood. Perhaps, Lady Rossden, you have forgotten who I am, though you remembered me very well when I was fortunately able to be of some use to you on your way to Paris in February. I am Oswald Bramsby of Hunterscombe, and your brother was the dearest friend that I ever had.”

“I had the pleasure of meeting you here,” said Lady Rossden, seeing clearly that her tactics were wrong—and then, without any allusion to what had passed, she talked with him till he went away.

When he had left the room, she said to herself, “Awkward, very awkward—this is—and there is that door a little open—he must have heard what I said. But I can’t help it—he shall *not* be let in again. My poor dear

brother ! so good and so sensible. And yet he was taken in by that dreadful man. He *is* a dreadful man, for he turned my words quite against me ; so that I was obliged, I don't know how, to speak in a friendly way, as if I liked him. Oh ! If my poor dear brother had only talked it over with Mr. Oldchurch, he would have seen what the Romish schism is, and how the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury is the successor of Augustine, and how the Pope never had any right at all to be more than he properly should be. But he wouldn't have a talk with him, and he wouldn't listen to me—all because old Bundleton would send him that book on the Thirty-nine Articles, and somebody else would send him an infidel poem—and so he was caught, and left me to put it right for poor Margaret. Oh ! It *is* dreadful. And that man is so handsome and so attractive, and has such fine manners and is such a fine man altogether that I really couldn't help being civil to him. It really is too provoking to have him come and stay in the neighbourhood like this and call here when I never expected that he would. I never gave him any encouragement—quite the reverse. And to remind me of my being glad to see him when the courier failed ! It *was* very awkward. One never should accept anything from people that one is wanting to avoid. One never should, never. I never *was* so put down. I had nothing to say. Why didn't I speak up and tell him that I wouldn't be spoken to so ? But how could I, when I had just been (I must own) quite rude to him ? Oh ! It *is*, it really *is* too provoking. And then to make it worse, he saved Margaret's life—so dreadful—I mean its being that man instead of somebody else. *That* brought him here, and he's sure to call again and try to see her. It's all because Margaret wasn't properly mounted. But how could I help that ? What has the horse to do with me ? And then when he spoke so provokingly of my poor brother's friendship for him, he made me look like a fool ; for it's quite true, unfortunately, and I couldn't deny it. But of course, if my poor dear brother had lived, he would have seen through him and the whole thing, and acted as I am acting,—of course he would—of course."

Fortified by this bold assertion, she rang the bell, and when the butler came, addressed him thus :

"Now mind, whatever you do, not to let him in again,

nor let anyone let him in. I won't have him let in, on any pretence whatever. You may tell him so, if you like—tell him anything you please—but I won't have him come here.”

It happened that the Baroness Diabolouski having, from an upper window, seen a horse led to the stables, had come downstairs to see the visitor. The nearest way was through the small room adjoining the library where the door was a little open, and stopping there to listen she heard enough to make her infer who the visitor was, and how he was being received. She paused for a moment in thought; then putting on her garden hat which was in the hall, she slipped out of the house, and walked at a gradually increasing pace towards the lodge by which Oswald would pass on his way back to Cubton.

This move on the chessboard was, in her own opinion and according to the general arrangement of her own affairs, a stroke of diplomatic genius. Oswald, she argued, must be either indignant or disgusted or depressed by his contumelious reception; and therefore be open to the influence of persuasive sympathy. He would see that he had deceived himself, or been deceived about the Pearl, and about herself—especially about herself—whom he considered as what she was, but now must consider as being what she ought to be. Seeing her in that light, she argued, and being sympathetically shown that he was not acceptable to the Pearl nor the Pearl adapted for him, he *might* possibly be open to the fascinations of a handsome woman, who could, under pressure of a sufficient reason, be attractive in any character. She considered, firstly, that she wanted to settle herself in Ilsetshire; secondly, that she had not yet been able to do so; thirdly, that Twerleby had annoyed her excessively, by going away and persistently keeping away when she went to Maplethorpe; fourthly, that Oswald, as himself and as the owner of Hunterscombe, now unencumbered, was more worthy of being struggled for than Twerleby, in spite of his being the Pearl's guardian and Lady Rosden's heir. Her conclusion was that she *would* struggle for Oswald, but with caution, so as not to commit herself. She must contrive the plot in such a manner that he would not perceive her meaning, nor anyone suspect it. This was a very bold attempt on such a man as Oswald; but her self-confidence, combined with

his personal attractions, made her feel equal to the occasion.

"He *is* so handsome," she thought, "and so complete a man. I shall be sorry, in a way, to deceive him about myself. He will find it so disappointing. But I can't help that. I have gone too far, committed myself too deeply to wish any longer that I could be as I once was. I am sorry for him in a way; which means that, having a sort of two-fold self—the myself that was and the myself that is—the myself that was is sorry for him—regrets the necessity of disappointing him. But here he comes. I must be as I am, and seem as I was."

Oswald, riding homewards slowly, saw her not, or rather did not distinguish her, his attention being pre-occupied, till he was so near that escape would be impossible without failing in courtesy.

"I must say something," he thought, "and be in a hurry. I *am* in a hurry. If this horse would only do something to get me out of her way!"

He trotted up to her, took off his hat and said, as he went by, "You are making the most of this beautiful day."

She stood still, and answered in a voice that followed him, "It is a beautiful day; but I came out for the purpose of speaking to you."

"I am sorry that you have had the trouble of walking so far," said Oswald, pulling up.

"The manner of your reception," said she, "astonished and pained me more than I can express. I was not present, as you know, nor have I seen her since; but the shortness of your visit, together with my own knowledge of her prejudice against you, and the orders she gave her servants as I passed through the hall, showed me how it was."

"I don't feel the worse for it," said Oswald.

"Of course not," said the Baroness; but *I* do, and *she* must, by this time. What could have made her so odd about you?"

"Her brother's conversion and my intimacy with him, I suppose. I can't see any other reason."

"Nor I, now that you mention it. I can't understand her about that. She believes in Apostolical Succession, and yet she has a horror of the only Church that has an unbroken descent from St. Peter. If I could only see the

necessity of that, as a condition of being God's Church, I should be a Catholic as soon as possible."

"How can a Church be the Church of God," said Oswald, "unless it has authority from God? And how can it have that, unless it has a divinely appointed Head? Did you ever hear of a living human body without a head? Is it conceivable that our Lord, God Incarnate, would let His Church be without any knowable deputy (so to speak) as His human instrument in this world, where He is not visibly present?"

"True," she said. "I see that. I cannot answer it. I long to be as sure of it as you are. I must ask you to have patience with me. I have so much to unlearn. I have thought of it and prayed: but I must pray more."

"If you will do that," said he, "and pray without any reservation, the rest will follow."

"I will," said she. "I will indeed."

Here she paused a moment or two, and added in a low voice, as if she were thinking aloud,

"How I wish that dear Margaret would do so!"

This was a master-stroke. Oswald, she thought, must ask the question, that would enable her to answer as an unwilling informant; and then she would, with evident regret, show him how clearly the Pearl was not at all what he had supposed her to be, but quite somebody else.

Oswald, however, would not commit himself to a question, as such. He only said, "I never saw any signs of indifferentism in her."

"No, nor did I," said she. "I spoke imprudently. Forget it, I entreat you; or I shall never forgive myself."

"Having heard it," said Oswald, "I am bound by charity to ask what it means. You would not, I am sure, wish me to go away with a wrong inference from your words, inadvertently spoken."

"Oh! no," she exclaimed impulsively; and her imitation of nature was perfect. "It was my fault. I ought to have been more guarded. How those words broke into sound, I know not. I was quite unconscious of uttering them."

"But," said he, "they could not have broken into sound if you had not thought them—or there would have been nothing to break from—and they must have had an

intelligible meaning, because you were in the fullest possession of your faculties."

"I am not so sure of that. In my opinion I was day-dreaming."

"Perhaps; but in day-dreaming we mean what we think."

The Baroness paused again, and appeared to be debating within herself, though she had arranged the whole plan, and only waited while he listened for more.

"Yes, we do," she said: "but we don't always mean to make it known. However, since I inadvertently said that which made you (naturally, I must admit) ask the question, I must answer frankly. Margaret is not in a state of pleasant indifferentism, like Sir Henry Melford, who sympathizes with Catholics, agrees to differ with a shrug of the shoulders when he meets an Agnostic, and in a few days will be numbered among the Evangelicals by right of marriage with Charlotte Amelia Bundleton of Blumbury No. She is not that. She has no belief in any religion; and, as a natural consequence, has no belief in anyone. She became so after her father's death. His becoming a Catholic seems to have upset her, by contradicting all that she had been taught in her childhood. She never saw him afterwards, as you know, and she told me that she never heard from him. But whatever the cause may be, the fact is so, I grieve to say. And now I have told you what I meant by those unfortunate words. Let them be as if they had not been spoken. After all, she *may* get out of it in the course of time."

"Every change takes time," said Oswald.

"I hope," said the Baroness, "that in time Lady Rosdden will think differently of you."

"I don't expect that," said he.

"I do," said she, "but not at present."

"She must think as she pleases," said he. "I can't help it."

"Well, I never was so annoyed as I am by that," said the Baroness, turning back. "Annoyed—not merely by the thing itself, but personally on my own account. I have been hoping that we should meet at Maplethorpe; for there were many things about religion that I wished to have talked to you about. Anyhow, I have shown the greatest confidence in you by saying what I have said; for if it

were repeated, Lady Rossden would never forgive me."

She then walked home, and he rode on, saying,

"Can this be true?"

"I have made a good beginning," thought the Baroness Diabolouski. "I said just enough about myself, and what I left unsaid will call for explanation when I have taken or made a fitting opportunity. He was a little too prudent, and he always is inconveniently acute. Never mind. It will be the greater triumph. I shall work my way by the help of his charity—get into Hunterscombe as a sort of catechumen, and so forth. When I shall have attracted him (which I shall hope to bring about soon by causing it to be reported) I shall have to be received into the Church, because that would be a *sine qua non*; and Father Bramsby will baptize me *sub conditione*, with great unction, just as if I were a promising convert. The rest, I fear, will be found very disappointing. What a pity it is that circumstances have gone beyond my good will! The great puzzle in all this, if one looks at it in a Catholic and logical way, is the discrepancy between my appreciation of him and my refusal to walk in his ways. The answer is that I have gone too far the other way. Yes—I have gone too far. I have no wish for what I should once have called better things. But why do I moralize in this manner, wasting time in looking back when I will *not* go back? He is a grand specimen of a man, and I *do* admire him: but he must be disappointed. Why did he cross my path?"

"She would have me believe," thought Oswald, "that she was brought up a Protestant: but I am quite sure that she was not. Is she merely trying to humbug me, for some reason or other? or is she inclining to get back into the Church? It may be so: but I have no belief in it, and certainly no belief in those words that 'broke into sound.' Yet there is something in them, and the difficulty is there. I must and will unravel it; but the suspense is a slow torture, almost beyond endurance."



CHAPTER XLIII.



HEN we are striving for an object, we think less of the end (however important) than of the means to that end, because no man takes council with himself, nor with anyone, about the end that he desires, but about the means of attaining it.

Βουλευόμεθα ὅου περὶ τῶν τελέων ἀλλὰ περὶ
πρὸς τὰ τέλη.*

And that was why Oswald found his anxiety more bearable than he had expected.

The Pearl cared for one thing only—the horse that Malmains had bought for her within a fortnight of his death. She rode every day; and every day Oswald rode one of Mr. Blastmore's horses in search of her.

Father Bramsby came to Cubton, and soon after his arrival Mr. Blastmore, having opened the case in his own way, put himself under instruction. It was easy to instruct him, because there was nothing to obstruct the teacher. He had nothing to unlearn, because he had learned nothing about religion, except the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed and the Ten Commandments. He made no objections, because he had nothing to object, and asked no questions, because Father Bramsby was so clear in his teaching and adapted himself so well to the manner of the recipient, that indeed there was nothing to ask. On the

* Arist., Eth. iii. 3.

fourth day Father Bramsby returned home, leaving remembered instruction and the Penny Catechism. Mr. Blastmore, making good use of both and recovering rapidly, was able at the end of a week to consider how soon he could travel as far as Hunterscombe, where he would be received into the Church and make his First Communion.

In the course of the next week after that strange visit to Maplethorpe, Oswald was riding every day through roads, lanes and fields, trying to meet the Pearl, and every day not meeting her.

Eleven days passed ; and on the twelfth he set out again, while Twerleby in Paris was walking down the Champs Elysées, considering the case between them. The course of events had combined Oswald and the Baroness Diabolouski against him. He wanted to marry the Pearl, not for her sake, nor for the sake of Maplethorpe as such, but for the sake of its rental. He longed for that with all the intensity of a man who had bartered his hope of the Beatific Vision for the chance of shining among the votaries of false principles, as a rush-light in a gas-lit hall : but Oswald was in his way, and the Baroness Diabolouski was making him keep out of the way just when he most wanted to be in the Pearl's way. The Baroness Diabolouski was then considering that Oswald was to be struggled for ; while he, not suspecting her in that light, was in search of the Pearl ; and the Pearl, having been deprived of her belief in him, had no belief in anything, because he, who was apparently false in relation to her, had been her ideal representative of the true.

When hope and fear are even, and the object is in a way everything to the wisher, hope is more easily raised than depressed by outward circumstances, and especially by the state of the atmosphere. Oswald felt the influence of an April day, such as is rarely enjoyed in England now—a day suggestive of life, growth and fulfilment. He felt it, and continued to feel it, even when turning homewards after another vain search.

The turn homewards brought him through a narrow lane into the old road, where her life had been saved by him, and his affected permanently by her.

"There or nowhere to-day," he said to himself when approaching the ford ; and there he saw her just afterwards

turning out of the other road. He pulled up a few yards from the ford, waiting to be recognized. She rode by, averting her eyes, and passed on. Oswald sat motionless on his horse till she was out of sight, and long afterwards.





CHAPTER XLIV.



R. BLASTMORE, ignorant of what had happened and much enjoying the near prospect, spiritual and temporal, of his visit to Hunterscombe, was so vigorously talkative that Oswald had to seem happy, till at last he found himself alone with his crushing sorrow. The night ended at last, because time that measured it moves on : but though he controlled himself sufficiently as a Christian, he was powerless as a man struggling against a human sorrow.

He tried again and again to persuade himself that he had been deceived in the Pearl,—that she was not as she had seemed, and therefore was unreal in relation to him—but he tried in vain. Instinct refused while reason distinguished. He came to no final conclusion. Was she the same in herself though not the same to him ? Or was she no longer what she had been ? And why had she cut him ? But had she cut him in the full sense of the word ? She had not looked at him, but rather avoided him by not looking. What did it mean ? Had he become odious to her, by reason of a change in herself such as the Baroness Diabolouski had let out or invented ? He rejected that, and searched for other possible causes, without finding even a false conclusion ; so that after a while he simply said his prayers and waited for the morning.

That morning was Sunday morning, and Mr. Blastmore had ordered the mail phaeton at a quarter to seven, so that Oswald might go to Holy Communion and afterwards to hear Mass at half past ten.

The turn-out was very good, and the horses comparatively perfect ; but to him they might have been any other pair. The only thing that he noticed in the course of that drive was the lodge at Maplethorpe.

"She has closed it against me," he thought. "No one else could."

This was true so far as the words went ; but it was not the whole truth. She had made herself even more miserable than she had made him, for there was no higher hope in her. He was deprived of his earthly hope. She was deprived of both. He had consolation before him at the end of his weary drive. She had nothing in prospect but her own thoughts and her own appalling solitude.

After breakfast, when Lady RosSDen said in a coaxing and hopeful manner, "My dear, won't you come to church with me?" she answered, "No, be satisfied with my *not* being a Catholic. Don't expect me to be anything or believe in anyone. I told you what I should come to."

Lady RosSDen said, "Oh!" and went in a pony carriage to the neighbouring village of Diddleton, where Mr. Oldchurch was going to preach. He was still preaching when Oswald, coming out of the Catholic church in Osmundsbury about twelve o'clock, after he had heard Mass, was accosted in soft accents by a lady veiled, who had been kneeling near the door.

"You will not, I think, be quite surprised at seeing me here," said the lady, "after our last conversation ; and yet, as it happened, I had no choice about being in Osmundsbury at this time."

"Our movements are not always under our own control," said Oswald, recognizing by her voice the Baroness Diabolouski.

"I went," said she, "to Backwater to see a friend who is there for a few days, and I slept here expecting to go back with Lady RosSDen, who usually comes to hear Mr. Oldchurch. But I had forgotten that she was going to 'sit under him,' as they say, at Diddleton to-day. The consequence is—that I must now go home in a fly. You rode here, I suppose?"

This was a question in the shape of a guess, and, as a question about a fact, it required an answer. But the answer must be that he had come in Mr. Blastmore's mail

phaeton ; and that would imply his going back in it. How could he, as a man and a gentleman, leave her to hire a fly, when he was going by the same road ?

"I am driving to day," he said, "and I shall be going your way. Will you allow me to set you down as I pass by ?" She accepted the offer gracefully, and he walked with her to "The George," wishing that he had come on horseback. When a Gladstone bag had been put into the phaeton he drove away, trying to say as little as possible in a sufficient number of words.

The Baroness, desiring to represent herself in a becoming light, was willing to let him be a listener speaking occasionally. She talked well and much, but not too much, and unfolded her representative self with an apparent simplicity that made Oswald ask himself several times what the meaning of it was.

"How," he thought, "can I reconcile this experience with the other ? and yet why did she go to Mass in Osmunds-bury of all places ? what could she gain by that ?"

The question was not answered, because the only person who could have answered it, if she would, could not be asked with any regard to civility.

"Time will show," he thought, "one way or the other. I must give her the benefit of the doubt."

"Why here we are, near Blumbury," said the Baroness. "Should you mind stopping there for a moment ? I have a parcel to leave, a small wedding present. It is fragile, and I should be glad to see it safely deposited."

"My best wishes to both," said he, turning in at the gate.

"Sir Henry is a friend of yours, is he not ?" said she, "I hope they are suited for each other. I know her very well, but not him. What do you think ?"

"My knowledge about that," said he, "is just the reverse of yours. I don't know her."

"But do you think that he will be a good husband ?"

"Yes, I do."

"And not mind the Sunday evenings ?"

"Not a bit, he will take to it all as kindly as possible."

"But not, I hope, from having no religion himself ?"

"No, not from that. He *has* a religion of an indeterminate sort. And therefore determinable."

When they drew up at the house, old Bundleton having

just returned from Little Blumford, where he had preached on the comfortableness of an invisible Church that we ought to believe in somehow, heard the sound of wheels, and wondering how that could happen there, on a Sunday, waddled up to a front window.

"Good gracious!" he exclaimed, "Charlotte Amelia! Look here!"

Before Charlotte Amelia could obey the summons the mail phaeton was nearly out of sight; but she still looked out of the window, just as if there were something to see.

"Are they going to be married?" said old Bundleton.

"Who would have thought of that?" said Charlotte Amelia at the window.

"I have come to your conclusion," said the Baroness Diabolouski in the mail phaeton. "The indeterminate religion will adapt itself to circumstances comfortably. But how little one knows! Sir Henry seemed rather to incline towards being a Catholic."

"Like the leaning tower at Pisa," said Oswald. "So far, and no further."

"I can't understand," said she, "how anyone can be contented to remain in that state of mind."

"So long as the mind," said he, "is in a muddle about the question involved, the answer is not apparent."

"On the other hand," said she, "people who were no less in a muddle, find their way and—find rest. By the bye, I heard that your good uncle has been at Cubton. Will he be coming again soon?"

"Yes, the day after to-morrow," said he.

"I should so like to see him," said she.

"A Catholic Priest," said Oswald, "is always ready for his business. My uncle will be at Cubton on Tuesday, at any time that you may name, unless he is detained at home by a sick call, which takes precedence of everything else."

The Baroness thanked him fervently, and meditated on the assurance given, while he was saying to himself, "This perhaps will test her sincerity."

They were now approaching Maplethorpe, for the conversation had been lengthened much by pauses, and Mr. Blastmore's pair had the habit of going at the rate of twelve miles an hour.

"Shall I drive you up to the house or not?" said Oswald.

"I think not, for your sake," said the Baroness. "It really is too—"

Oswald heard no more, but setting her down at the lodge on that side of the park, drove on.





CHAPTER XLV.



CERTAIN Poet began a poem with the words :

“ From wild Canada’s cold and frozen shores.”

The false quantity is objectionable, but unfortunately, it must be confessed, we sometimes make false quantities in our comparative judgment of things, with disastrous results—laying stress on the least important, as Oswald was led to do by the force of his own grief. He thought too much of having been unnoticed by the Pearl, and much too little of the Baroness Diabolouski at Maplethorpe—though he knew both, and also Lady Rossden. Why was this? The answer is that as excess of light blinds the eye, and excess of sound makes the ear deaf, so does an excessive impression of one thought on the mind weaken the power of reasoning more or less, as long as the cause operates. When, therefore, the Baroness called at Cubton, the day before Father Bramsby’s arrival there, he took her for granted as she might happen to be, and cared not to examine further.

As might have been expected, she was precisely what she had been while driving in the mail phaeton from Osmundsbury. This, when experienced without any apparent contradiction of the evidence, would, she thought, have a pleasing effect: which was just what she meant it to have, distinctly on Mr. Blastmore, who, however, much objected to seeing her, but had to do it by reason of her kind enquiries previously. External do help to persuade, because we are composite beings; and her dress was completely adapted for showing her off to the best advantage; while her

countenance, being well trained, represented obediently what was required.

Mr. Blastmore, not being impressionable by force of art, and strongly disliking that agreeable lady beforehand, eyed her suspiciously at first, though trying to be civil in return for the kind enquiries ; but when she said that she had first ventured on calling upon him, as having been a valued friend of Malmaines, (which was not strictly true as then and there expressed), he grunted a lachrymose "yes," and thought that after all, perhaps, he had been a little too hard on her.

"She's a foreigner," he suggested to himself, in explanation of that view. "I daresay they don't know our ways and we don't know their's. And yet, somehow, I don't seem to swallow it all."

"The friendship of such a man," said the Baroness, "leaves a mark on one's life."

"Which friendship you never had," thought Oswald, and then he relapsed into a state of mental absence, leaving himself out of the conversation as much as he could.

"A mark on one's life," she repeated : and Mr. Blastmore agreed with a strong sound of assent ; for though the metaphor was a strange thing in his mind, he knew that it meant something good about Malmaines.

"I have had," said the Baroness, "a large and varied acquaintance, beginning when I was a child and extending over the greater part of Europe ; but a finer character I never met with, nor one that equalled his—*except one only*." These last words were aimed at Oswald ; but, notwithstanding the voice and the manner and the emphatic pause and a simultaneous looking down, it was quite unnoticed by him.

"I have been told," said she, "and indeed I expected no less, nor could I have believed less of him—I have been told that he became a Catholic."

"Yes ; and I've done the same," said Mr. Blastmore ; "and so ought everyone that wasn't a Catholic before. I can't make out how I could have been gammoned so long. But I didn't think. That's it."

"Because you naturally took on trust what you had been taught as a child," she said. "One shrinks from questioning it ; and indeed so we ought, till the question comes

before us in its true light, and enters into the conscience. Even then the old habit is terribly strong, associated as it is with the memories of childhood. Something more is wanted—something above and beyond our own power to give or receive, before we can truly say, ‘I believe in the Catholic Church’”

“That’s the grace of God,” said Mr. Blastmore. “You’re getting on the right road. Mind you don’t get off it, or you’ll get into a ditch.”

“I should never turn aside,” she said reproachfully.

“And you mustn’t go back,” said Mr. Blastmore, “or you’ll upset.”

“It seems to me,” she said, “that on the road you are speaking of, turning aside or going back would come to the same thing.”

“That’s right,” said Mr. Blastmore. “Well, I congratulate you beforehand, that I do.”

“Allow me to reciprocate that,” said the Baroness. “I am quite sure that you will neither turn aside nor go back. Thank you for a most interesting conversation, which I would willingly prolong, but that I am not mistress of my own time just now. I had intended to come here to-morrow, hoping to have met Father Bramsby.”

“Come to-morrow,” said Mr. Blastmore. “He’ll show you the way.”

“I wish with all my heart that it depended on me,” said the Baroness, rising from her chair. And then she expressively said no more, except the words, “Thank you so much. Good-bye.”

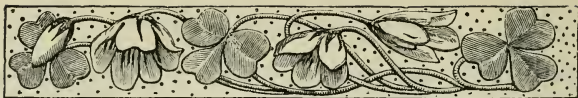
When she had gone, Mr. Blastmore said,

“Well! Who’d have thought of all that? Upon my word, you know, if she wants to see him it’s a pity not to give her the chance. Couldn’t you ask her to Hunterscombe next week? She might get herself finished off and be a devout Catholic. She talked as if she meant business.”

Oswald was not so sure of that; but of course he assented.

“I can’t refuse *him*,” he thought; “but I don’t like it. Her reformation is too rapid, her conversion too sudden.”

And then he thought no more about her, but only of the Pearl.



CHAPTER XLVI.



NECKER said of his wife, "Il n'a peut-être manqué à Madame Necker, pour être jugée parfaitement aimable, que d'avoir quelque chose à se faire pardonner."

This may be understood to mean either that her friends disliked the suggestions of a good example, or that she was rather too well satisfied with her own good behaviour.

Perhaps, and even probably, the statement was true in both ways : but certain it is that a want of something to be forgiven supposes an obscuring of intellectual light, as Lady RosSDen showed practically in herself. She was good in a limited way, and being satisfied with that, neither saw nor tried to see further : so that the Baroness Diabolouski did not consider her as perfectly amiable, but as a great bore, of whom she had to make use, had made use, and again made use as a protective dupe, when the next morning's post brought her an invitation to Hunterscombe. She opened the note as soon as the servant had left the room and read its purport with the utmost rapidity, triumphing in prospect, but strangely troubled.

"Why," she thought, while running her eyes over Oswald's unwillingly written note, "Why does the memory of my First Communion break in to cross my purpose, and the dreams of my girlhood come back, to mark what he is, and what I ought to be when seeking to attract him ; and what I am and must be—*will be*. I must end this and speak."

"What a trouble it is to read a long letter !" said Lady RosSDen, who wanted to say something because no one else did.

"Mine," said the Baroness, looking up slowly, "is not long, but rather startling. There is no secret in it."

She gave the note to Lady RosSDen, who read it three times and then said: "What are you going to do about it?"

The Baroness, being again herself as she then meant herself to be, answered slowly and pensively, as wanting advice.

"What do you think about it," she said. "After the reports *have* been heard but not proved—no, *not proved*, though the evidence was very startling, but *not proved*—certainly *not proved*—I don't like to refuse the invitation. It would look uncharitable, as if one prejudged the case on insufficient grounds; for however it may turn out, we really cannot say that what we have heard is conclusive against him. How can we take it for granted when Mr. Blastmore is so friendly with him?"

"Perhaps he is going to marry the niece for the sake of the uncle's money," said Lady RosSDen.

The Baroness paused, as in thought, and then answered in a suggestive tone, "Hardly that, I think. Mr. Blastmore will have nothing to do with her."

"I think that *you* have made a conquest of Mr. Blastmore," said Lady RosSDen. "That accounts for the invitation, because he is going to Hunterscombe. I never heard of anyone staying there before."

"My experience of my own married life," said the Baroness in a low voice, "would not incline me that way. But I must answer this note."

"I believe you are right," said Lady RosSDen, who had a secret curiosity about Hunterscombe, and felt secure against Oswald. "I always disliked him, never could bear the sight of the man; but, as you say, it is better not to seem hard on him. If I were you, I should accept the invitation."

They then separated, each thinking of the other in relation to herself.

"Her rudeness to him," thought the Baroness, on her way upstairs, "was my opportunity. What a fool she is! The worst of fools—a judicious fool. She has misused her position here, done everything that would have been most hateful to her brother, destroyed the happiness of his only child. And why? For the sake of keeping her negatively

in a State-founded Church that doesn't know what its own doctrines are. She placidly contemplates the result, puts on a Sunday face and says, 'Poor child! It *is* so sad. We must bear it patiently. She will come all right.' But this judicious fool has been and is most useful to me. Had she acted otherwise, Oswald Bramsby and Margaret would now be engaged. I am sorry for the poor child, sorry as a woman, who against her will and in contradiction to her permanent meaning, cannot help remembering what she herself once was. But I have remembered that enough and too much. I have now to make full use of this opportunity—a twofold opportunity. And besides, I shall have to see that hateful man who is always crossing my path, and has written to say that he must see me. I can tell him to be at Backwater, then I can go there on my way to Hunterscombe, and make him clearly understand that he has no chance of being invited to Maplethorpe."

"Yes, I think so," said Lady Rossden on her way out. "She had better go to Hunterscombe. It will not commit *me* to anything; and (as she hinted) her going from this house will look well. It will show that I am not unfair to him. And then—suppose that she really *has* fascinated Mr. Blastmore! It would be a very good thing for her, and I *must* say, would relieve me from an embarrassment. She has no influence over Margaret, none at all; and so I had rather be without her. But I can't ask her to go, and she won't go, I'm afraid, of her own accord. If Mr. Blastmore would—it would really be quite providential."

In the shrubbery she met the Pearl, and said, "What do you think? The Baroness Diabolouski has accepted that invitation to Hunterscombe."

"I don't care," said the Pearl, passing on.

"I am *so* glad to hear that," thought Lady Rossden, "she is coming right by degrees."

"I don't care," repeated the Pearl to herself. "I don't care what happens. Why should I? What have I to care for? And yet I *do* care, and look back to the time when I cared happily. All is passed, never to return. It never can, for we are not the same as we then were. I have nothing to look for. Why then should I care? I don't care. I won't care."



CHAPTER XLVII.

“By this hand, they are scoundrels and subtractors that say so of him.”—*Twelfth Night*.



HIS was just what Mr. Blastmore said in his own way when, on the morning of his departure for Hunterscombe, he received a letter, in which he read these words :

“They say that Bramsby of Hunterscombe had been previously married, or falsely married, to the girl that he pulled out of the sea. I never believe off-hand what I hear ; but she was at Hunterscombe afterwards till the next afternoon. It looks queer.”

“D—n the blackguard who set it about.” said Mr. Blastmore. “There now ! I shall have to confess that, but I really didn’t mean it, and I’ll never do it again. What a thing a bad habit is to get rid of ! I should like to catch him though. If ever I do, I’ll let him know. I’ll make an end of the thing right off.”

He then sat down, thrust the fingers of his left hand through his hair, and in big writing, wrote as follows :

Dear Tattleton,

The report you speak of is a lie, such as I have no name for without swearing, which I mustn’t do. Who is the malicious and sneaking scoundrel that set it about ? If you know, tell him that he had better keep out of my way, unless he wants to be kicked. Anyhow tell everyone you see what a malicious and sneaking lie it is. Don’t I know all about it ?

And can't I prove what I say? and won't I prove it, if they say any more? Tell them that plainly. Tell everyone you see, and believe me,

Yours truly,

Benjamin Blastmore.

Having directed the envelope, he wrote another to the same effect but in gentler terms. This he sent by a groom, to Lady RosSDen, who said to herself, "No, I really can't contradict it. I have nothing to do with it. He is Mr. Blastmore's friend, not mine."

But she had borne witness against him by assent, and therefore owed him the restitution suggested. Oswald, had he been present, might fairly have answered in Shakespeare's words:

"Thou concludest like the sanctimonious pirate,
That went to sea with the ten commandments,
But scraped one off the table."

There was no one, however, to point this out, nor any disposition in her to listen, but a certain misgiving she had, that made her repeat angrily, "I have nothing to do with it."

She repeated these words many times, walking in the park; and then, ordering the harouche, drove to Osmunds-bury, where she had luncheon with the Dean, while Mr. Blastmore and Oswald were arriving at Hunterscombe.

Soon after their arrival Mr. Blastmore went into the chapel to say his prayers. Father Bramsby left him there, and walked out with Oswald.

"I have taken rather a strong measure," said he. "I have sent for Miss Warringford, because I must reconcile him to her before I receive him into the Church. He will be thankful to me for settling it in a practical way quickly."

"I don't think you will have any difficulty with him," said Oswald. "I spoke to him about it, and he took it very well."

"She will be here this afternoon," said Father Bramsby.

"There will be another guest here the day after to-morrow," said Oswald. "He asked me to invite the Baroness Diabolouski."

"He? Why he told me that he couldn't bear the sight of her."

"Yes; but she made him believe that she wanted to be a Catholic. In my opinion she is a fallen-away Catholic;

but I may be wrong about that, and I may be wrong in my estimate of her sincerity. This move of her's would seem to be against her interest, and yet somehow—"

Here they were interrupted by the distant sound of wheels.

"Miss Warringford," said Father Bramsby, turning back. "She has come earlier than I expected; and if he were to see her without any warning, it might be awkward."

Before they could reach the house, the fly had driven up, and Mr. Blastmore had left the chapel. Crossing the hall on his way out to meet them, he met her.

"My dear Uncle," said she going up to him timidly, "I want to ask your forgiveness and nothing else."

"There now, it's all at an end," said Mr. Blastmore. "I'm not free from blame about it myself. And besides, I'm going to be received into the Church to-morrow morning. I couldn't carry it on, you know. Come out and walk a bit."

Father Bramsby met them at the door and, seeing the state of the case, congratulated himself on having been absent. He went out again taking another direction, and Oswald was about to follow slowly, forgetting everyone except the Pearl, when a horseman trotted up to the gate, and a voice said, "Glad to see you again, always glad, gladder than I am to see anyone else."

"My dear Fetherhed," said Oswald. "I am very glad to see *you*. Where did you turn up from?"

"Backwater. I have been staying there with an aunt of mine. I am going back to London to-morrow."

"Come here instead, and stay a few days—or rather stay as long as you can. You will do without London and London will do without you. It isn't an earthly paradise, after all."

"No, it's rotten enough: and anyhow I had rather be here. I wasn't worth a rap till you set me straight. Well, I'll put up the animal and stay a bit, and come to-morrow."

"Did you ever meet Mr. Blastmore?" said Oswald, on their way to the stables.

"Blastmore?" said Fetherhed. "Why, didn't you upset him once? and didn't he swear a lot?"

"Well, he is here, and he will be received into the Church to-morrow."

"That's jolly. I thought he was a good fellow. Anyone else?"

"Yes, his niece; and your friend, the Baroness Diabolouski to-morrow."

"You don't mean that? Why is *she* going to be a christian?"

"So it is supposed."

"Is it? I don't believe a word of that. Depend upon it, she's up to something. She'll be setting her cap at old Blastmore. Mind what you're about when she's in the house, or she'll be at some sort of mischief. She got hold of Lady Rossden, and between them they've turned Mapletorpe inside out. There's a something queer about that; and it's my belief that Twerleby's in it. He's as bad a lot as ever was."

"How much," thought Oswald, "we can learn in the concrete from all sorts of people!"

"He hinted to me three months ago," said Fetherhed, "a thing that made me speak up. I didn't like to bother you with it. And what's the use, I thought, of his being a Catholic, if he goes about hinting and detracting—heaven knows what—in that way without any foundation at all?"

Just then, while returning from the stables, they saw Father Bramsby and the two guests walking in the wood.

"Who's that?" said Fetherhed, colouring in a bashful and simply self-conscious manner.

"Miss Warringford, Mr. Blastmore's niece and adopted daughter. You remember seeing her, travelling from Paris, last January. She was coming back from France, and lost her purse out of a bag that she carried. The poor child ran away from home, it seems, because her uncle wanted her to marry someone she didn't care for; so she thought he had cast her off and was afraid to write to him. Now they are friends again, as you see. But it *was* fortunate that I was there, in Paris, just then, otherwise she would have been in an awkward position for a time. Here they are. Let me introduce you."

This he did with such complete success that when he slipped away, to be alone, Mr. Blastmore was saying to Father Bramsby, "I like that young fellow;" while Fetherhed was devoting himself to Miss Warringford with great satisfaction to himself and without any opposition

from her. The fact was that Fetherhed had fallen in love with her, even to that depth which is popularly described as over head and ears, while she, though not prepared for so sudden a plunge, was drawn towards him by his hero-worship of Oswald, and also by the simple evidence of wanting help in his way of life. That evidence, if the man who gives it has a certain strength of his own and shows his defect with simple truthfulness, pleads powerfully before a true woman if there is no impediment. Gertrude Waringford was a true woman, and she had neither a pre-engagement nor a religious vocation. Fetherhed, therefore, had a great opportunity, being, as before said, over head and ears in love ; and he showed every sign of wishing with all his might and main to profit by it.





CHAPTER XLVIII.

"O come spesso il mondo
 Nel giudicar delira,
 Perchè gli effetti ammira
 Ma la cagion non sa. . ."



AYS Metastasio. Which means in rough English that we blunder continually about things that happen, for want of the reason why. This is very observable in modern politics, wherein that worshipful abstraction, the public, laments many results without seeing the evident causes made by itself; and the Baroness Diabolouski, though not thinking of Metastasio, wondered why the General Foreigner wanted to see her (as he had expressed through the post), had even insisted on it—forcing her to come to him at his local habitation, for the time being, at Backwater.

"I told him," she thought, "that Margaret was out of the question for him. And he knows that I neither can nor will lend him money again. Shall I go?"

But she did go, though uncomfortably, knowing the man and herself in relation to him, as a progressive revolutionist. She put herself into the 11.45 train at Great Blumford; and as the train went on, so did she in her way of thinking, till she found herself out of it. She then threaded her way through the streets till she came to a small house in a small street where the word APARTMENTS was pasted up in large letters on the bow window of a small room on the ground floor.

In this room, which was decorated with scanty window curtains of brown moreen, an oleographic portrait of the G.O.M., a pair of shells on the mantlepiece, and a yellow chimney-board, sat the General Foreigner, getting up a suitable smile to receive her with.

"How glad I am to see you," he said.

The Baroness, having a valid reason for not appreciating the gladness answered abruptly,

"I came at great inconvenience, and I must go in a few minutes."

"That will be sufficient," said he. "It was the more kind on your part, and I value it the more. When shall I be invited to Maplethorpe?"

"Never," said she, decisively, "if you are found prowling about on the edge of the county, and lodging in such a hole as this, in the back slums of a watering place. You haven't learnt the ways of civilized society. I can assure you that I have risked every sort of intolerable suspicion by coming here. I will do all that I can, as I have told you more than once, to get you invited: but you *MUST* wait. The house is upside down. The heiress was ready to be a Catholic when her father was so; but he died; and Lady RosSDen, who lives there as her guardian, believes, or fancies that she believes, in the infallibility of her own pet parson. The present state of the case is this: the heiress, for reasons that I have no time to explain, has had her incipient Catholicity turned into no belief at all; but, up to this time, and with no signs of settling down at present, she is most unhappy in that state, and sees no one."

"Give me the invitation," said the General Foreigner stiffly, "and I will do the rest. Lady RosSDen and I have a bond of sympathy in our wish to keep out the one great enemy from Maplethorpe. It is easy to get that invitation."

"If you think so," said the Baroness, "write to Lady RosSDen, and invite yourself."

"It is not for me to do that," said he. "You are her intimate friend, and I am not. Come now. You will do it, I know."

"I *can not*," said she.

"But finally you *must*," said he. "You understand what I mean. It must be done, and *soon*."

The Baroness, like Twerleby, had to climb down. "I

will ask her," she said, "to invite you, if you really wish it ; but I must choose my own time."

"It must be done, and soon," he repeated. "I shall not remind you again."

"I am not going back to Maplethorpe now," said she : "probably not for three weeks or more."

"Very well. But you must do it when you return there ; and as the delay will put me to the cost of two journeys from Paris, besides other expenses, I must ask you to lend me fifty pounds."

"Good-bye," said the Baroness with extreme rapidity, and retreating at a pace that caused the General Foreigner to run in pursuit.

"Stop," he roared. "They will think that you have stolen something out of the house. They will send for the police."

This unpleasant suggestion made her turn more rapidly than before, and hurry back into the bow-windowed room.

"Are you mad?" she said. "For your own sake—"

"Fifty pounds," repeated the General Foreigner.

"And leave myself without money? You have no feeling at all."

"Necessity compels. It is fated so. You always carry some money in that little bag."

"Yes, for a journey."

"No. More than that. If you open it, I shall see : if not, I shall know that you have three, four, five hundred pounds in it. I see how it is by the fact of your not opening it, and I shall know how to regulate myself."

The Baroness, driven into a corner and knowing him to be absolutely unscrupulous, opened the bag.

"Look," she said. "There are fifty pounds here—all that I have. If you take it all, I shall go to the work-house ; and you may invite yourself to Maplethorpe, and be snubbed for your pains, or kicked out by the butler. Choose yourself, you pitiful scoundrel, who would bully a helpless woman, and howl, if Bramsby of Hunterscombe had you by the throat, as he will, if he knows who began a certain story, and finds you in this county. Here it is. Take it, if you will."

"Were you a man," said the General Foreigner, "I should know how to avenge such an insult——"

"Yes, by murdering a man who couldn't fence. Don't provoke me to say more. Take it, here it is. But I shall tell Lady Rossden what you did, and tell her all about you. I don't care for myself. I am desperate. I swear that I will tell your whole history all over Ilsetshire. Take the money; take it, I say. Why don't you take it?"

The General Foreigner shook inside his clothes, and his teeth chattered; but the money in notes and gold stimulated his greed.

"It is necessity," he said in a whining voice. "Let us say thirty. I will repay you soon. *Au revoir.*"

The Baroness took three five-pound notes and fifteen sovereigns, pushed the amount into his opened hand, and withdrew her's as if she had touched a serpent.

"My kindest friend," said the General Foreigner. "I——"

"Save yourself the trouble of telling another lie," she said. "You know that I hate you as much as you taught me to hate God."

Before the General Foreigner could excogitate a reply, the Baroness Diabolouski was in the street, exclaiming with a violent repression of sound, "Scoundrel, beast, liar, sneak, bully, coward, living libel on human nature, living protest against the doctrine that God created the human soul!"

She then went back to the station, and there awaited the arrival of the half past three train, to meet which and her, Oswald's old yellow chariot was sent.

When the General Foreigner, after surreptitiously watching her movements, departed at a quarter to five carrying with him his thirty pounds and his offended dignity, she was just arriving at Hunterscombe, where, unexpectedly meeting Miss Warringford, she wished that one of them at least,—and Miss Warringford by preference,—were in some other place.

"That girl will ruin me," she thought, "unless I can gain her over."

"This house," she said, addressing herself to the inopportune young lady, "has a Catholic aroma about it, that carries one back in imagination to the ages of Faith."

Miss Warringford, though fortified by a previous judgment, found herself unable to answer coldly. How could she

without implying a cold appreciation of Hunterscombe and of Oswald and of Father Bramsby?

"It has indeed," she said, "as I have reason to know ; for I received my first Catholic impressions here, and here I was first instructed."

"As *I* hope to be," said the Baroness, adding after an impressive pause. "No one knows fully what the want of that *is*, except those who have felt it."

"That's right," said Fetherhed, coming up, "there's nothing like going at it at once, and getting scraped and pulling oneself together."

The Baroness laughed, because that was the right answer : but the idea of proximate scraping was so unpleasant, that she came all over in a prickly heat.

As Twerleby did, at or about the same time in Paris, when he read a letter received by himself directly from that somewhere in the Post-office known as *Poste restante*. The letter was from Lady Rossden, who said at the end of much irrelevant writing :

"Do come back. *I want you so much.*"

But how could he go back when the Baroness Diabolouski was, as he thought, (being ignorant of her last move) waiting for him at Maplethorpe? And how could he *not* go, when Lady Rossden, to whom he owed and from whom he expected everything, not exclusive of the Pearl, told him to go? The prickly heat in him was excessive.





CHAPTER XLIX.



STRIVE always," says St. John of the Cross, "not after that which is most easy, but after that which is most difficult:" and this was just what the Baroness Diabolouski was doing, but not in the way of perfection, nor apparently in the way of success. Her resources however were numerous, and quickly accommodated to the need.

It remained for her to show what she could do when confronted by two contradictories; for in logic, which is the written law of common sense in reasoning, two contradictories cannot both be true, while experience is against their seeming so in the long run. She was bent on making Oswald in love with her—a big thing to do, by the way, circumstances considered in relation to what he was—and, assuming that she could, the following question was imminent: How could she satisfy him about her Catholicity without fulfilling certain obligations? But these obligations must be either truly fulfilled or sacrilegiously gone through. The former alternative was against the desperate set of her will: from the latter she shrank in desperate fear, the hideous fear that only an apostate can feel, who has experienced the grace of the Sacraments, rejected it deliberately, had it offered again, and, with the full intention of a final act, elected in unrepenting terror to be lost.

Such a choice, with full knowledge and consent, would seem incredible, if considered on the surface, but not when we remember what the fallen angels are in proportion to us,

and what we are without the grace of God. She was practically a monomaniac, led by impulse to commit eternal suicide, yet shuddering on the brink of the abyss.

When she had been at Hunterscombe about a week, Mr. Blastmore and his niece returned home, previously inviting Mr. Fetherhed to Cubton. This invitation he repeated just before his departure.

"We shall be very glad to see you there," said he. "We've got on uncommonly well together, all three. You'll come there as soon as you can."

"That I will, and with all my heart," said Fetherhed. "I shall be counting the hours and the minutes. But I don't like to go while that Baroness hangs on. It seems to me that she's at something."

"I'm afraid so, when I come to look at it," said Mr. Blastmore. "She doesn't get on with what she came for. I wish I had said nothing about her to Bramsby."

"And there's something queer altogether," said Fetherhed.

"It doesn't look square," said Mr. Blastmore. "You're right about staying till she's gone—you'll be (don't you know?) a somebody else with ears and eyes, and sticking in the way. And you've plenty of mother wit, as they say. It can't be for long, anyhow."

"I *hope* it won't," said Fetherhed, empathically, seeing Miss Warringford approach. "It's too much for me, it is indeed, to be kept away."

The evening of the day after Mr. Blastmore and his niece had returned to Cubton, Father Bramsby said to himself: "The Baroness Diabolouski stays on, and we can't ask her to go. What is the meaning of this? She makes no progress that I can see—always a fresh difficulty cropping up—and there we are—*da capo*. There is something strange in it. I must wait and see. But how long *is* she going to stay?"

The Baroness had put this question to herself more than once, and not finding the answer that she wanted—had an attack of neuralgia—which delayed her instruction, and, consequently as meant, her departure. The convenient neuralgia was made known to Lady Rossden in a short letter, that expressed regret for the prolonged absence from Maplethorpe. Lady Rossden said in reply :

"I am sorry to hear that you have been suffering from your old enemy: but neuralgia comes and goes suddenly, so I shall hope to find you quite well again soon. You are quite wise, however, to remain near the sea while these east winds prevail, for you are most likely to shake it off. During your absence I have heard news! They say that you are going to be married to Mr. Bramsby! Old Bundleton and Charlotte Amelia say that you have been driving about with him; and Charlotte Amelia said, 'You know that does look like it.' She was thinking of herself driving in Sir Henry Melford's tandem after her engagement, and old Bundleton being rather shocked at it. Am I to congratulate you? Please tell me, I am dying to know. But after all that we have heard of HIM I can hardly believe it. Augustus will be here in a few days. . . ."

The Baroness, having chosen the end for which most certainly she was not created, would have been glad in a way, when she read the last item, had she been less pre-occupied in her mind, because, in the last analysis of her own case, Twerleby was her last resource in Ilsetshire.

Her last resource precisely. In no other way was he acceptable. She despised him as himself, and hated him for not corresponding with her conditional choice. Moreover, she had become really attracted to Oswald, hero-worshipped him in secret against her will, and intended to struggle for him desperately, without exception of any possible means, lawful or unlawful. Thus disposed, she answered Lady Rossden's letter in these words:

"My dearest Lady Rossden,

"Your kind letter, which, as usual, was more than all that I could have expected, was a great comfort to me, and even had a soothing effect on the intense pain that I was feeling. In reply to your question as to whether you are to congratulate me, and if I am engaged to Mr. Bramsby, I can only beg of you not to congratulate me, for my experience of marriage has not been so encouraging as to make it, to my mind, a subject of congratulation. But if you see that a man is miserable, and he tells you that you have it in your power to reclaim him—to make him good and happy—one might be weak enough to

reconsider. It is true that I was driving with him when Charlotte Amelia saw me, but that was quite accidental and quite against my wish. When I began this, I intended to write a longer letter : but I am suffering so much that I must reluctantly bring it to a close. I hope to be very soon at Maplethorpe. Please burn this, and believe me

Always your's very affectionately

Thérèse Diabolouski.

Later in the day Twerleby, still absent through fear of the Baroness present, was walking down the Champs Elysées in a prickly heat, and thinking of Lady Rossden's last letter.

"That man," he muttered, "has——" and then he stopped the muttering lest anyone walking by should happen to overhear the rest. "That man," he thought, clenching his teeth, to prevent the escape of sound, "half philosopher, half lawyer, that evil genius who has crossed my path ever since I first saw him in a railway carriage, not knowing who he was nor expecting to see him again—is helping my other and worse evil genius to thwart me, though they are in direct opposition to each other. My aunt won't admit him : but what of that? Might he not meet Margaret on horse-back, explain all and ruin me? That she-devil is forcing me to be absent and *he* has the advantage of it. But *she* is the worst ; I must uproot her from Ilsetshire at all risks (but there is no risk in it really). I must go back and speak."

But the Baroness was thinking that he might go where he liked and marry anyone, if she could only captivate Bramsby of Hunterscombe, while the General Foreigner, whom she intended to keep out, was assuring himself that he would not be kept out, but make her bring him to Maplethorpe.

Just then Twerleby and the General Foreigner met under the trees in the Champs Elysées, almost bumping against each other by reason of Twerleby's efforts to repress impulsive muttering. Progressive truth was quite forgotten in the progress of his concrete difficulties complicated and threatening.

"Well met," said the General Foreigner smiling with reservation.

"Not so well," said Twerleby, "because I have an engagement."

"I too," said the General Foreigner, "have an engagement, but friendship, you know, overcomes everything."

"The devil take your friendship," thought Twerleby. "You know too much, and you mean to ruin me if you can. But I mean to be a match for you."

"I have heard a report," said the General Foreigner, "a report that I, as your friend, must refute; but I cannot do so till you shall have refuted it to me. They say that a man made a false marriage with a young lady here in Paris not so very long ago, and then he went his way, but not with her. I was told that it was you. What shall I say to that?"

"Tell them to prove it," said Twerleby. "Am I the only man who was in Paris at the time, whenever it was? *You* were here, no doubt—and Bramsby of Hunterscombe was here. I am not accusing either of you."

"Bramsby?" said the General Foreigner. "Bramsby? well—when I think of it—yes, I see. But the story has got about. So I advise you not to go to Maplethorpe till I have a chance of clearing you."

"*You clearing me!* As if they don't know all about me in Ilsetshire. I wonder at your listening to such a canard as that. I shall not condescend to notice it. Good-bye."

"I must go to Maplethorpe," he said to himself, "go at once and face it out. *She* is in the convent, so I am safe for the present. Besides, she would not know me. He and the Baroness Diabolouski have no chance against me. He wants to get a hold over me, but he can't get it. Neither can she. I will go to England this very night." But he neither quickened his pace nor turned homewards.

"He is very bold," thought the General Foreigner. "I am almost certain that he was in Paris at that time, under a false name, and with light hair and moustaches and no beard. His beard was beginning to grow when I saw him afterwards in London. If *I* could recognize him notwithstanding his disguise, most certainly *she* could, if she were to see him. Yes, my friend, I have you in my power. The Papalino of Hunterscombe is out of my way, thanks to Lady RosSDen's belief in the infallibility of Mr. Oldchurch; and this other barrier also shall be removed. I swear it. But I must do that myself. I cannot depend on the

Baroness. One never knows what counterplot she may be working at."

Soon afterwards, Twerleby, calling for a possible letter directed *Poste Restante*, received one from Lady RosSDen. In it she said that the Baroness Diabolouski was going to marry Oswald Bramsby, and was then staying at Hunterscombe.





CHAPTER I.



OUR-and-twenty hours after his interview with the General Foreigner and the arrival of Lady RosSDen's letter, Twerleby was at Maplethorpe, rejoicing in a modified way at the absence of the Baroness Diabolouski, who, while reserving him for a last resource was, at the same time, and without any good-will towards him, trying to serve his cause by appropriating his rival.

So, while Fetherhed at Hunterscombe was falling deeper and deeper in love with Miss Warringford even absent, Twerleby, present at Maplethorpe, was darkly hoping to win its heiress. The attempt would seem to be as desperate as that of the Baroness Diabolouski on Oswald ; but like her, he shrank not at all from it.

Knowing well that Lady RosSDen would favour him for her own sake and for his, he hinted the question, and receiving a warmly favourable answer, determined on making an extreme attempt as soon as possible. Accordingly he watched the Pearl, till he found her walking in the park at a rapid pace, after a long ride.

"I missed you," he said, "near the ford, and then I rode home."

This was not exactly true, but neither was it perhaps, in his agitation, quite formally untrue. He had thought of riding, meant to ride and thought of her, and the two were in a sort of way involved.

"I never went near the ford, nor did I see you riding anywhere," said the Pearl, which disconcerted Twerleby.

But he had screwed himself up to the point, and also felt the necessity of explaining how he had ridden without being on horseback. So he plucked up courage and said :

"It must have been what they call unconscious cerebration that made me say that. I was going to ride, and then I did not, because I heard that you had started half an hour before, and they could not tell me in what direction."

"Couldn't you ride alone, as I did?" said the Pearl, quickening her pace.

"I really could not," said he. "It was more than I could force myself to do."

"You never were very comfortable on horseback," said she, turning suddenly towards the house.

This left him the alternative of either giving up, or taking long strides to catch her up. And so, considering that his opportunities were limited by the length of the Baroness's visit at Hunterscombe (for he disbelieved in her engagement to Oswald Bramsby), he walked after the Pearl, sufficiently after to admit the supposition, by a stretch of the possible, that he had not heard the deprecatative words.

"I am not at all in a mood for chattering," said the Pearl, in a tone of impatience, quite foreign to her nature, but now habitual.

"My dearest Margaret," began Twerleby.

"Don't call me that," she said. "No, not ever. If you had cared about me or my father, you would not have brought the Baroness Diabolouski into the house, and sent the old servants out of it. Be satisfied with your power while you have it, and leave me alone."

"You mistake me, *you do indeed*," said he, and his emotion was genuine, as such precisely. "I had nothing to do with bringing the Baroness Diabolouski here, nor with sending away the old servants."

"Do you mean to tell me," she said, "that you did not co-operate in either?"

"I did not co-operate in either," he said, feeling sure that Lady Rossden would not betray him.

"Not by advising?"

"No."

"Nor by agreeing?"

"No."

This was a big lie, but he had gone too far to have a scruple about that.

"Did you," she said, "advise Aunt Julia *not* to send away the old servants, and *not* to bring the Baroness Diabolouski here?"

He hesitated for an instant, and said with the emphasis of effort, "Yes, I did."

"Then," said the Pearl, "it is a remarkable coincidence, that both were done soon after her consultations with you, indoors and out."

"What could I do?" said Twerleby, in a pathetic voice. "Remember that to me she stands in the position of a mother. She morally compelled me to come back here, when I was in Paris and going to Norway, trying to forget you, and—"

"*Me?*" interrupted the Pearl. "Then *do* go to Norway. Go to Norway as soon as possible. Be anywhere except here, where I am, and where I shall not remain, unless you go away. You have said too much, and I, in spite of myself, have strangely, incomprehensively, detestably, hideously, understood too much. My father made you one of my guardians, and this is how you take advantage of your opportunities. I will hear no more. Go."

Twerleby, though screwed up to the extreme point of daring, and not deficient in any sort of courage, except the higher courage of the Christian, felt an almost irresistible inclination to run away, without any regard at all either to his personal dignity or the value of the prize. But knowing that for him and his fortunes it was a question of now or never, he followed her and said:

"Hear me in my own defence, and then, if you will, tell me to go, tell me to keep out of your sight henceforth. So far from taking advantage of opportunities, I purposely deprived myself of them, staying away till I was impatiently, and even angrily summoned. I betrayed myself to-day, but not intentionally. Before I could check myself, the words were spoken. I have one more excuse to offer, an excuse that I make unwillingly, because—but you will see why. If I spoke too soon, or—worse than too soon, the reason was that your father, before he died, *wished me to do so*; and confided to my care a codicil, which he said, (not

in any way to cramp your freedom) was to take effect only—in case—afterwards—not to be shown to you till then.”

The Pearl stood still, and looked through him with such an expression of agony, that, bad as he was, he could hardly bear it.

“After what?” she said. “Think before you answer. I have no other witness to ask. Don’t deceive a poor wretched girl, who is without a friend in the world—who has nothing to love, nothing to hope for, nothing to remember except the irreparable. Don’t deceive me. *Don’t*, if you have any regard for yourself, any fear of retributive justice.”

Twerleby was terror-stricken, and trembled so much that he could hardly speak; but the crisis was now, and he had committed himself too far. He must either go on, or acknowledge that he had tried to make her infer, for his own advantage, what he knew to be false.

“After *what*?” she repeated. “After *what* was the codicil to take effect and be shown to me?”

“You will be angry if I say *what*,” he answered.

“I cannot be angry at my father’s wish, truly told. But don’t deceive a helpless girl, who is in your power because you are the only witness of what he said. After *what* was the codicil to take effect?”

“You had better not insist on asking that question,” said Twerleby, knowing that she would.

“After *what*?” she said “was the codicil to take effect?”

“After that which I fear will never be,” said Twerleby in a broken voice that imitated true emotion well.

“After *what*?” she repeated. “I must and will know.”

He paused again, and apparently making an immense effort, said, “After our marriage, to which you will not consent.”

There was a dead silence that seemed interminable to him, uncertain of the prize for which he had lied so hideously to the living and the dead. The Pearl showed no sign of any emotion except in the fact of not showing it: but when she spoke, the voice was not her’s as it had ever been heard before.

“To do what my father wished,” she said, “is all that I care for now. In two cases I have been tricked out of the power to do it. This is in my power: but the wish is very strange to me—strange and incredible.”

"I have the codicil in my possession," said he. "I will show it to you, for I have it with me. But he sealed it with his own ring, and of course I must not break it. Some of the contents however were made known to one of the witnesses, old *Suprême*. *You* were not to know it then, for he wished you, as I said, to be free. I ought not to have told you even this much—but you dragged it out of me. I can send for old *Suprême*—I have his address; and you can ask him if what I say is true or not."

At this bold appeal to an ear-witness absolutely credible, the Pearl became as pale as a living woman could be. She stood quite still, as if she had been struck dead by a flash of lightning. She breathed, because in fact she was alive; but there was no perceptible appearance of it. At last she spoke; and the sound of her voice made him feel a sudden longing to shrink, if it were possible, away from himself.

"I am ready," she said, "to fulfil my father's wish, as being his wish: but that will require your consent, which——"

"*My* consent?" interrupted Twerleby, with dramatic pathos, highly tragic and impassioned. "Oh! If——"

"Your consent," she repeated, "which, if you are worthy of being called a man, you will decline to give. Hear what you would have to expect, and then consent, if you can. In the first place, I have always disliked you, even as a cousin; and that dislike has increased a thousandfold at the prospect before me. I can't bear the sight of you: and besides that, I care for another—yes, for another. Do you hear *that*? I care for another: and though I never, never can be his—never will—I care for him still as what he was, or seemed. All is buried in the memory of what he was, or seemed. What he was, or seemed, is sacred to me. Do you understand me? I should hate you, I *do* hate you."

Twerleby bowed his head without speaking. The Pearl walked on and said:

"Will you show me the codicil?"

"In the drawing room," he answered; "where no one else will be just now."

They went into the house, and he brought the codicil from the cabinet where he had put it, to the drawing-room, where she awaited him. He put the document into her hand and stood before her, not saying a word. On the sealed envelope were these words written in pencil:

"The codicil to my will. Left with Augustus."

"This is my father's writing," she said. "Let me see *Suprême* as soon as possible. Send for him. 'Till then, I can't see anyone, especially Aunt Julia."

"I will take care of that," said Twerleby, "and send for *Suprême*."

"I am sorry for having spoken as I did," said the Pearl. "You must attribute it to—that which I told you besides—that which I was driven to reveal, when I scarcely would acknowledge it to myself. I require you as a man and a gentleman to be for ever silent about that."

"On my honour as a man and a gentleman," he said, "I will never, and only that you have said you never would or could be his—and that I do not even know who he can be—I would, were it possible to secure your happiness at my own cost—leave you for ever this moment, and never——"

But she had passed from the room before he could finish the sentence, and he remained in his own company which was neither good nor agreeable. It was not good, because in himself, as he was, he could find nothing but sin against light. It was not agreeable, because there was enough in him, of what he had once been, to make him ashamed as a man, and remorseful without contrition as a Catholic fallen away. He left the room, replaced the codicil, and hurried, almost rushed out of the house, panting for a cold breeze to allay the heat of his brow.

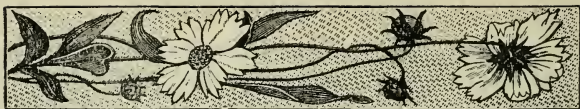
Certain it was, that without contrition before God, and an open confession before men, at least before the Pearl, he never would be able to pull up in his downward course: and if the difficulty was greater then, so was the opportunity and the claim on his manhood and the cry of conscience. The opportunity was greater; for the Pearl, as he well knew, would forgive all, keep silence about it, and be a firm friend, if he would only tell her the truth about her father and Oswald. The claim on his manhood was more striking, by reason of what she had revealed in her agony. The cry of his conscience recalled the whole story without omission and without excuse. That noiseless voice was to his soul as the sound of a trumpet heralding his last opportunity. He hurried on, facing the wind, but not the better alternative. Like a bull attacking with his head down, he closed the eyes of his mind, and madly set his will against reason and

conscience. The end of it was that within two hours Lady Rossden heard of his proposal, persuaded herself that in a short time the Pearl would "come round," and, in order to forward this result by the suggestive action of report, was writing the news as a great secret to the Barcness Diabolouski.

But how about *Suprême* and his intended evidence? The answer is that he was not able to give evidence at all, having died a holy death in Paris, three days before. The news, though it had not yet reached Maplethorpe, was known to Twerleby—because a waiter, at the hotel where he then was, knew who he was, and therefore told him the fact.

To this depth he had come by rejecting the grace of God.





CHAPTER LI.



TWERLEBY had made his final choice in relation to the Pearl; and this, unless afterwards reversed—which was more improbable than ever, because the difficulty was greater, while his will was more self-enslaved—would make impenitence final, inasmuch as penitence would involve the necessity of restitution. It remained for him to consider how his own version of the codicil could be made credible to her by the mere fact that her father had written on the envelope, “Left with Augustus.” *Suprême* alive would have exposed the fiction, by declaring that he knew nothing whatever about the contents of the codicil. But *Suprême* was dead, and therefore Twerleby was safe. The other witness, if found, could only say that he had witnessed Malmaines’ signature, and therefore be, so far, in favour of Twerleby’s interpretation. But what if the Pearl, distrusting him, were to insist on being given the codicil on their way to the church, were to open it immediately after the ceremony, detect the fraud, and exposing him to all the world, leave him then and there? “Clearly,” he thought, “the codicil must be somehow destroyed; but not too soon, lest she should ask to see it again.”

The prickly heat, felt by him when he thought of all this, was equalled in the person of the Baroness Diabolouski, when she read Lady RosSDen’s letter, and gathered that her last resource was about to escape her, while she was trying to ensure the last but one.

She read the letter, word after word, checking with all the force of her strong will the outward signs of emotion, and then awaited her opportunity to let it out. At first she thought of telling it to Father Bramsby alone, for transmission to Oswald, that so an occasion might be made for her in the first excess of his grief; but Father Bramsby was not to be found, and if he were found would perhaps take his time about repeating it. Meanwhile delay was not only dangerous, but impossible; the time was approaching when she must either do what she had ostensibly come for, or return to Maplethorpe without any last resource. This description of her arrangements will seem to verge on the comic, as in fact it does; but in the tragedy of an ill-ordered life, the comic element often is; and emphasizes the tragic by contrast. The reason is evident. Evil, being privation of good, deprives us of God, who is Goodness, and from Whom all the good that is in us comes by a finite participation of the Infinite Good. Therefore it deprives us of the dignity that belongs to man as being created in the image of God, and makes us, by deprivation of that, liable to be in undignified positions. The Baroness Diabolouski knew this, and suffered the pangs of unaccepted humiliation, together with intense anxiety, such as she had never felt before.

A terrible retribution had avenged on her the cause of Oswald and of the Pearl. In seeking to win him falsely, she had gone farther than her intention, and, in spite of her will, was now enslaved by a desperate love of the man against whom she had plotted.

The most striking point in the retributive consequence was the uprising of a good impulse, to punish and warn, and by suffering reclaim, if she would be reclaimed.

The same retribution had come on Twerleby. He had begun by longing for Maplethorpe, and ended by falling madly in love with the Pearl. The difference was that the Baroness had been attracted by Oswald himself, Twerleby by the Pearl in anger. Such attraction was quite natural, as anyone may see who will take the trouble of remembering what happened when Twerleby tried to propose and found himself resisted. He was humbled without repenting, and therefore kept his pride, and therefore admired the anger and scorn that he falsely took for pride. This

admiration he applied also to himself, as her tragic admirer, and thus uniting himself in imagination with her, became a hero of his own making. Therein he had fallen below the Baroness, with less temptation. While he was meditating on the management of the codicil, she was looking for Oswald alone, and alone she found him in the wood, walking homewards.

This was just what he had been trying to avoid, without knowing why: and therefore seeing her eyes intently fixed on an open letter that she held in both hands, he assumed that she was occupied, and said as he passed by, "Fresh air helps one to get through one's letters."

The Baroness answered as if she had not heard. "Marry him?" she said. "Oh! Margaret—"

"Who? What?" said Oswald, losing for a moment his self-control.

She started and looked up without speaking. The expression of her eyes and features forbade his passing on, so intense was that look of sadness and sympathy.

"What is it?" he said, having heard too much and not enough.

"Lady Rosden," she answered, "writes that Margaret is going to be married to her cousin, Mr. Twerleby. I never was so deceived in any one."

"What is done," said Oswald, mastering himself with an extreme effort, "is in the past, and what is chosen we must suppose to be chosen with—some sort of freedom."

"Yes, with some sort of freedom," said the Baroness. "But there is freedom in the light and freedom in the dark. She is free in the dark. She is absolutely without faith—absolutely without a wish to have it. You had no means of knowing that, although—"

"*Although*—what?" said Oswald.

"*Although it was there*," answered the Baroness, with a nervous effort. "She was so charming and seemed then to have such very great capabilities, and be all that would most attract a man who has a high ideal of what a woman should be."

This was simply torture to Oswald; but he had determined on hearing every word, for the bare chance of getting a clue to the mystery.

"Forgive me," she said, "I am saying too much."

"I am listening," he answered.

"Margaret," she said, "was apparently all that, and ought to have been so really, if she had followed her father's example, as—at one time, she was inclining to do. But when her father had become a Catholic she suddenly drew back, and became a complete infidel, glorying in it. Mr. Twerleby has apostatized and believes in nothing, and glories in it. That is the meaning of their engagement. Yes. Margaret, as she might have been, if she would, was a beautiful possibility that never can be realised, a flower that withered before it had grown, a remembrance that leaves nothing but the remembered ideal without existence in fact. In losing that, you—"

"Losing," said Oswald, "implies that we have had something to lose. Nothing cannot be lost."

This he said, because he would neither admit anything about himself in relation to the Pearl, nor falsify fact by denial; but the Baroness was not listening while he spoke.

"In losing that," she said, "you can only lose the impersonated ideal, made by yourself aspiring in all ways, natural and supernatural—yes, I mean that precisely, and I say no more than the bare truth. It must surprise you, startle you, terrify you to hear me speak as a Catholic, when I came here as a Protestant, asking to be instructed. I will tell you my lamentable story. Yes, I am a Catholic, and a Catholic who fell away from her religion. But listen, and as what you are, the noblest man that I ever knew or imagined, listen in pity at least, and remember me in your prayers. I lost my Catholic mother when I was three years old; my father, who was a Catholic in name only, not in practice, did all that he could to undermine my faith, and forced me, at the age of sixteen, to marry a man worse than himself,—a man whom I could neither love nor respect,—a man utterly detestable,—who shot himself six months afterwards, having gambled away his whole fortune. One of his friends was the man who passes as a friend of mine, because he got himself invited to Blumbury in that character. You have met him and seen through him: so that I need not say what he is and with whom he is associated. He is an able man and I fell under his influence by reason of his apparent sympathy in trouble. For I had no true friend in the world, nor ever had a true Catholic training.

I was miserable in that state ; but there was no one to help me, while all my Catholic impressions were bad or blurred. *You* removed them, rooted them out permanently, left the deepest and most complete impression of all that leads to the end for which we were created, all that makes this life beautiful and happy in our passage through it. In an unguarded moment I said too much, and more than ever, I am saying too much again, and . . .”

“Only more than I deserve,” said Oswald, as in a parenthesis.

“No,” she answered, “not a word more, but more than I have a right to express. In an unguarded moment I spoke of that which led on to this—forced me on, against my will, to forget the prudence of the world and even the dignity of womanhood. Yes, even that, I know it, feel it, shudder at it as a lady and a guest, shrink from it with ineffable shame as a woman : and yet I *must* go on. I *must* speak. If not, either my heart will burst and I shall die before you, here, as I am, out of the Church, unfit even to make an act of contrition, or I shall despair of God’s mercy, as one who is abandoned in her greatest need, her last hope, her agonizing cry for help from the only one who ever shewed her the true way,—the *one* on whom she absolutely depends.”

A lesser man would not have dared to hear more, nor so much. A less chivalrous man would have extricated himself without regard to her. Oswald, pale as a corpse and suffering horribly, awaited a pause.

“On whom,” she said, “I absolutely depend—yes, on you, because the dead faith and the disused practice were revived by you, and with you are inseparably connected. I am not worthy of you, I know it well, and it aggravates the unbearable agony that I *must* bear, the overwhelming shame from which there is no escape. . . . no escape, nor ever can be, no, never except—”

She burst into a flood of tears, and sobbed so piteously that no true man could bear the sight in silence. But he had no time even to think of what he should or could say ; for however long she remained in that state—and that he knew not, amid the confusion of thoughts that occurred—he was aroused again to listen, simply by the thrilling sound of her voice.

"No escape," she said, except through you and with you. Your noble heart was given to a personified ideal that personally has no existence, and the awakening from that beautiful dream leaves an immense void that never will close, but *may* be filled by the immensity of a true and appreciative love, the total devotion of a life, the enormous force of unity. Never could I suppose myself to be worthy of you. I never could believe that, not even by the evidence of my utmost efforts. I have never known any woman worthy of you, nor is there one existing. But neither is there any one capable of the devotion that I feel. In that and by that I can, indeed I can—"

She covered her face with her hands, and the next words were choked in their utterance by sobs more violent than before.

A more horrible position for a chivalrous man to be in cannot be imagined. How could he avoid committing himself without humiliating her? Praying intensely, in one deep aspiration, for help and guidance, trusting to that alone, he said: "You have done me the greatest honour that a man, as a man could possibly receive, and given the greatest possible proof of confidence. The only way in which I can show myself to be not quite unworthy of that is by completely appreciating as indeed I do—"

"Do you?" she said. "Oh! let me hear it again, and believe in what seemed impossible."

The crisis was awful. It left him no choice. He, chivalrous as he was, must, as himself and all things as they were relatively to him, say, in some sort of words, what anyhow must be humiliating in the extreme to a woman who had so committed herself as a woman. Say what he would, explain as he might, it must come to that, and speak he must. But before he could do so, a voice was heard in the distance, and a footstep among the dry leaves in the wood. The voice was loud and clear—the voice of Fetherhed, saying:

"Hallo! I've been looking for you all over the place. There's a man from Humbleton-in-the-Hole that wants to see you about a summons or something very particular, and he can't wait."

The Baroness mastered herself enough to smile without any appearance of a struggle, and moved away as if

continuing an extended walk. Then her countenance changed so terribly that no trace remained of what it was before the interruption.

"Hate," she muttered, "hate now, hate only. But no. Not for him. He said, 'in completely appreciating, as—as, *indeed I do*;' and when I said, 'Oh! let me hear it again,' he was going to say more. He cannot go back from that—no, he cannot, will not, shall not."

"There's nobody from Humbleton-in-the-Hole that I know of," said Fetherhed, looking back to verify the increasing distance between them and the Baroness, as he and Oswald were walking homewards. "I told a lie, and I'm not ashamed of it, to get you away. She was at something—I know she was."

"What could there be for her to be at?" said Oswald.

"What? Bless your heart! I've got a pair of eyes. But you wouldn't tell. You're not the sort to do that. Well, there's nobody from Humbleton-in-the-Hole, but there is a letter from Hunterscombe—and there's something in it that concerns you a lot and, as he says, you'll have to be off to London directly—some business or other, you know. Never mind. It's all right. She'll be off: and a good riddance too. If she meant business, why couldn't she go to Osmundsbury and get scraped? It's a plant, that's what it was. She isn't a protestant—nothing of the sort. What did she mean by wanting to come here? That's it. He's quite right."

"I can't make it out," said Oswald. "A letter from Hunterscombe?—What is it—and who is *he*?"

"Mr. Blastmore. He brought it himself—rode all the way with it—rode hard. In his indignation he read it out to Father Bramsby before me—forgot I was there, I suppose, and off I came to find you. He left home after ten o'clock and it isn't one yet."

"But how did the letter come to him?" said Oswald.

"The housemaid brought it to him this morning—found it in a dark corner under the sofa or somewhere."

"Whatever may be written in it," said Oswald, "which of course has nothing to do with my happening to meet the Baroness Diabolouski in walking through the wood—"

"Hasn't it though," said Fetherhed. "You'll see."

"Whatever I may see, or not see about that," said

Oswald, "I see how kindly and well you have acted."

"I shouldn't be worth a rap, if I hadn't tried to do something," said Fetherhed. "If I am good for anything I owe it to you."

"Not to me, but to the grace of God."

"Yes, of course: but didn't you—"

"I only helped you to help yourself, and, as you said just now of yourself, *I* shouldn't have been worth a rap if I hadn't. But here's Mr. Blastmore—coming towards us."

"There they are," said Mr. Blastmore, advancing by long strides and holding up a letter.

"Look here!" he shouted, as soon as they were within hearing distance. "Lady Rossden must have dropped this. It was found this morning under the sofa where she sat. She called at Cubton on her way back from Osmundsbury, where she got the second post letters. They brought it to me just so—quite open, and of course I looked at it, to see whether it was written to me. What do you think I saw? And then I looked at the signature—written by the Baroness Devilwhisky. Just look and see for yourself. Here are the words, '*In reply to your question, whether you are to congratulate me, and if I am engaged to Mr. Bramsby, I can only beg of you not to congratulate me, for my experience of marriage has not been so encouraging as to make it to my mind a subject of congratulation.*' I never would have believed—not if anyone had sworn it till he was black in the face—that I should ever be found reading somebody else's letters. But, you know, it was like having a knife stuck at you in the dark. One must defend oneself as one best can. So I had to pocket my principle and see what was up. Now see what the devil in petticoats goes on to say. '*I beg you not to congratulate me,*' and so on. '*But if you see that a man is miserable, and he tells you that you have it in your power to reclaim him—to make him good and happy—one might be weak enough to reconsider. It is true that I was driving with him when Charlotte Amelia saw me, but that was quite accidental and quite against my wish.*' There's nothing much more in the letter—but that's enough. You must be off. It isn't safe for you to be here till she's gone."

By this time they were near the house, and Father Bramsby came out to meet them. Putting his hand on

Oswald's shoulder, he said, "You have seen the letter. You had better have some business in London. I will make your excuses. I have ordered your horse to be ready to take you to Backwater, and will send on your luggage by the dog-cart as soon as it is packed."

"Yes, you really must," said Mr. Blastmore.

"He won't tell," said Fetherhed, "but he knows better than we do why he must. Come along."

"I never thought," said Oswald, "that I should live to run away."

"You're not running away," roared Mr. Blastmore. "You're only defending yourself. If you didn't you'd be tempting Providence," as the saying goes.

"Come along," said Fetherhed: and they started off to the stables together, while Father Bramsby went with Mr. Blastmore to order the packing. When that had been done, Mr. Blastmore said:

"I must give her this precious letter: and then she may think what she likes—but I take it she'll prefer to suppose that I don't know what's inside. I won't show that I know anything. I'll be as polite—"

"That won't do," said Father Bramsby. "She must know that the letter was brought to you open, otherwise there would have been the envelope: and she must know that you looked at the signature to know that it was her's. If you're so civil therefore, knowing that you have read it, she'll be setting about that she's engaged to you! Let me give her the letter after you have started homewards. She needn't have it 'till after that. Besides she is too sharp not to know why Oswald has suddenly gone. There is no escape. She must see that we know what is in the letter."

"Suppose we don't give it to her at all then?" said Mr. Blastmore.

"If you don't," said Fetherhed, who, returning from the stables, heard the last words, "She'll stay on, under pretence of being received into the Church and making her First Communion. She'll go through the whole thing, she would, to gain time and make people talk about her, staying so long in a bachelor's house."

The Baroness appeared at luncheon. Pale and pensive she was, but as conversational as ever, showing no sign of restraint. Her pensiveness was caused by the absence of

Oswald, who, remembering her in relation to her statements about the Pearl, was on his solitary journey, praying for help to find out the true state of the case. If the Pearl was herself as he had known her, and if her state of mind, whatever it might precisely be, was the effect of some arranged misunderstanding about her father's conversion, all could be explained. The more he thought of that, the more he suspected, and the further, and the more strongly. But then, how could he explain while she, through some misapprehension, of which he knew nothing, would not speak to him?

To this he had found no answer, when at that time Fetherhed and Mr. Blastmore slipped away from the dining-room at Hunterscombe, after luncheon, leaving Father Bramsby alone with the Baroness.

"I was asked," said Father Bramsby, "to give you this letter from Mr. Blastmore. It was found at Cubton somewhere on the floor, just as it is, without the envelope."

Putting it into her hand, he turned away as having other things to do; but she, keeping her eyes on the writing, followed him, and said with a calmness rather too excessive:

"By his sending it to me he has evidently read the signature; and on seeing that, he must have seen Lady Rossden's name just above. Why did he not send it to her? But I am very glad that he sent it to me, because I see that it might be dreadfully misunderstood. I was so ill when I wrote it that I left out a passage that was in the rough copy I made. (Unfortunately I destroyed that.) Here, in reference to her question, I wrote,—for happily I remember the very words I intended to write, and wouldn't have believed that I had not written them, if I had not seen this—here, after referring to her question, I wrote, '*I can only say that I was utterly surprised and immensely annoyed when I read it. I beg you not to congratulate me for the report is absolutely without foundation. Moreover my experience of marriage has not been such, &c., &c.*' All that refers to my late husband, as you must see. '*Many people would say that it was my own fault, because I knew what he had been. But where a man tells you*' and so on. You see now how it happened. I was suffering from neuralgia in the eyebrow till I could hardly see what I

wrote nor think of what I was writing : in fact I wrote it so badly that I was ashamed of sending it, and in copying it over again left out those passages. I generally read an important letter over after I have written it : but I did not do so that day because I had put off writing 'till the last moment, and the postman was waiting. If I had read it, I should have perceived the omissions of course. But the letter unfortunately went. I must ask you to judge about that with Catholic charity and Catholic reasoning. But I must ask one question. Did Mr. Blastmore show this letter to anyone ?”

“He showed it to Oswald,” said Father Bramsby, “because it concerned him, and—”

“I *do* think,” she interrupted, “that he might have abstained from putting both of us, and especially me, in such an awkward and embarrassing and painful position—to use the mildest possible terms. You will excuse me, I am sure, for not saying more. It really is—”

“Most painful,” said Father Bramsby. “I quite understand how it happened.”

The Baroness was not so sure about the extent of his meaning, but advisedly seemed satisfied.

“I know,” she said, “that you would understand me. You have always understood me, through all the troubles, and the wearing out difficulties that must, in a way, have tried you so much, while they tortured me. I hoped and believed that all would end soon, and so it would. But this fatal accident has made it impossible for me to stay longer than to-morrow morning. I recommend myself to your good prayers, which I know will not be wanting.”

She bowed, or rather curtsied, with graceful reverence and left the room. Father Bramsby pitied, but did not believe.

“Pray for you, of course,” he thought, “and offer the Holy Sacrifice for you, but with very little hope, if any.”

The Baroness Diabolouski went upstairs, and in her bedroom lighted a candle. She then held the tell-tale letter in the flame till it was consumed, and spread the ashes among the coals in the grate, saying in thought, “Fool ! idiot ! destructive, ruinous idiot ! but for your hideous carelessness, *he* would be here now, and I could win him through his disappointment, his chivalry and his

own interpretable words interrupted at the critical moment."

In that opinion she deceived herself completely, in spite of her remarkable acuteness ; but it passed as true, and, as such, maddened her.

"Now," she muttered, "all is over, and *he* has gone—gone because I am here, gone in scorn of me, not having avoided but refused ; gone, remembering my humiliation. All is over. Hate, bitter hate, alone remains—and revenge when I can compass it."

If Twerleby could have seen her face at that moment, he would have left his suit in the care of Lady Rosssen, and sought safety in Norway.

"Hate," she repeated, "bitter hate ;" and then she wrote as follows :

[PRIVATE.]

My dearest Lady Rosssen,

I have, as you know, stayed here longer than I intended, or wished, owing to a bad attack of neuralgia, that confined me to my room half the day ; but, ill or well, I MUST return to-morrow. The fact is that your question about myself in refereuce to Somebody, has been answered in the affirmative by the Somebody, and in the negative by me. I really COULD NOT bring myself to that. He is, I fully admit, MOST ATTRACTIVE in every way, and if I had no experience of the world, I might have been tempted. But the risk is too great, even for the sake of doing good. And then, too, there is the difference of religion, which is so fatal. Will you kindly send some sort of carriage to meet the train that arrives at half-past two. I most earnestly beg of you to burn this as soon as you have read it. I would not have its contents known for all the world.

Yours very affectionately,

Têrèse Diabolouski.

"Well," thought Lady Rosssen, as she tore up the letter, which she received at breakfast, and put the pieces into the fire. "I wonder did he really—I can hardly believe it."

But she told the confidential news as a great secret to the Pearl.



CHAPTER LII.



ABOUT the time named in her letter, the Baroness Diabolouski arrived at Maplethorpe, desperately determined on taking possession of Augustus Twerleby in defiance of him and in spite of Lady Rossdén. Her will was firmly fixed on that, her mind on the means of accomplishment; nor did she shrink at all from the contest when Lady Rossdén, in the small room beyond the library, said, after kissing her on both cheeks :

"I have more news for you. The lawyers are going to make the marriage settlements. Between ourselves, Margaret was a little disinclined, in a way, at first—she feels her father's death so. But all is going on well now."

"What a nice thing," said the Baroness, who was prepared for some disclosure. "No doubt it will settle her mind. He will be a very good husband; and in these days, you know—"

"Exactly," said Lady Rossdén. "Some people will blame me, because he is her first cousin; but *you* won't, I am sure."

"Oh! no," said the Baroness. "I like it so very much."

This comforting answer was followed by two more kisses on either cheek, and the Baroness went upstairs to take off her travelling cloak.

On her way she had, without being seen, a distant view of Twerleby; and she marked whither he went, because he seemed to be, and in fact was, avoiding observation.

Twerleby went into the library, opened the doors of a carved oak cabinet, and after a great many attempts, which

occupied at least ten minutes, and with much fumbling, he found the way of opening a secret drawer that he partly remembered. Then he took out the codicil and Malmains' letter to the Pearl accompanying it, from the outer drawer where they were, put them into the secret drawer just found, closed it, and locked the cabinet, putting the keys into the drawer of his writing table. He then went his way, satisfied with having discovered so secure a place—known to himself alone.

But the whole proceedings had been closely watched. The Baroness, impelled by a sudden and unaccountable suspicion, that, like herself, he was up to something, had, as she passed up the stairs, after seeing him go into the library, remembered the little peep-hole within the housemaid's closet at the end of the gallery, where you could look down into the library and see everything that passed. She quickly mounted the stairs, went through the gallery, entered the closet without being seen, and, straightway peeping, was in plenty of time to see him fumbling about, and open the secret drawer. Afterwards, when the coast was clear, as verified by her own observation, she slipped into the library through the small room beyond, unlocked the cabinet, opened the secret drawer, and took out the two documents that Twerleby had taken such pains to conceal. Her eyes glistened when she saw what they were; but quickly putting them into her pocket, she relocked the cabinet, replaced the keys in the drawer and went upstairs to her own room.

A few minutes later, she came downstairs again and went out walking near the house, waiting to see the Pearl, who was taking her usual ride on the horse that Oswald had tried.

Within an hour the Pearl was off her horse, and the Baroness meeting her expansively,

"You dear and most interesting girl," she said, "for you are so, and whether you believe me or not I shall always feel the same. I have been thinking of you more than ever. Lady Rosden tells me that you are engaged. I trust that it will be for your happiness."

The Pearl looked up wearily and said, "They tell me so. They tell me that my father wished it: and I care for nothing but him. Everything else is dead, or not what it

was, except the horse that he bought for me before he died. There was nothing left for me but to do what he then wished."

"You dear unhappy child," said the Baroness, "for a child you are in the ways of the ruined world in which we are now living—*do* come and walk with me in the farther part of the shrubbery, and let me try to be of some use, or at least show how thoroughly I understand you, and sympathize with you. Perhaps I can help you a little. I have a sad and varied experience, that began almost as as soon as I knew the difference between good and evil."

"Yes, I will," said the Pearl, walking in that direction. "There is nothing to be done for me, but as you mean kindly, I may as well hear what you have to say."

When they were in the shrubbery, and out of earshot, the Baroness said :

"Did your father tell you that he wished for this marriage?"

"No, but he wrote it in a codicil, which he told Augustus to keep."

"Have you read the codicil?"

"No. I am to read it afterwards—on that morning."

The Baroness remained silent, as if considering how to answer prudently, while her face expressed surprise and suspicion.

"My father," said the Pearl, not noticing the look, "told old Suprême, who was one of the witnesses, all about it, and what he wished. I asked Augustus to send for him, but he had just died—a day or two before. Besides that, my father wrote on the outside in pencil, 'Left with Augustus.' I have seen it. The writing is his."

"That may be," answered the Baroness with sudden energy, as if she were forcing herself to speak: "but these words can only mean what they say. His leaving it with Mr. Twerleby does *not* show what the contents are. You would not be justified in accepting such a statement on such evidence as that. Just ask yourself whether your dear father was likely to wish for this marriage, or, supposing that he did, was likely to act in so strange a way, not having expressed that wish to you before, nor even writing it in pencil on a slip of paper then, but leaving you to hear it from somebody else,—you, his most dear child,

his constant companion, in whom he confided absolutely. Is it like him? Is it consistent with his character which you so perfectly know? Is it what he ever would have done under any conceivable circumstances?"

"I have often asked myself that question," said the Pearl: "and my answer has been the same as yours. But what could I do? I couldn't feel absolutely certain of it, because he might have had some motive unknown to me. I was absent, and he was on the point of travelling to Rome where I was. I *cannot* know for certain. I am assured that he so directed. His words, written on a sealed envelope, that holds the codicil, might mean what I have been told—seem, in a way to mean it, because there seems to be no reason for writing them unless they implied more."

"His reason for writing them," said the Baroness, "is proved by the words themselves. The codicil, as I understand, was not drawn up by his lawyer, but written by himself after he was taken ill, to express his wishes about something that occurred to him then, whatever they may have been; and therefore when he entrusted it to Mr. Twerleby, who was with him at the time, it was natural that he should state the fact in writing outside the document. Don't you see that?"

"I do," said the Pearl, "since you have pointed it out. But I was so miserable, and cared so little for anything, that I never thought of it."

"The case is clear," said the Baroness. "There is the outside of the codicil, for you have seen it. There is the inside, which you have not seen. You have not seen what it says, and yet you are binding yourself by it, sacrificing your life to it. There must be some mistake. People do, you know, persuade themselves to see things as they wish. Temptation is very strong sometimes, and human nature is weak. There must be some mistake about it."

"How?" said the Pearl. "There is more than the codicil. My father, as I was told, expressed in so many words, the same wish that he expressed in the codicil. There cannot be any mistake about that. It must be either true or false."

"My dear Margaret," said the Baroness, "you don't know human nature as the world is now training it to be. You don't know the terrible force that temptations have in

these days, when principles are loosened, and wants multiplied. Your father was quite exceptional. You mustn't measure others by *that* standard. There is only one thing to be done; you must insist on opening the codicil and reading it for yourself—with your own eyes. You *must*. You owe it to your father as well as yourself. You have no right whatever to sacrifice yourself blindly—no right whatever to act on the alleged words of that codicil, on the authority of one man personally interested. I trust that I have persuaded you."

"Yes, I *am* persuaded," said the Pearl. "I *will* insist on reading it. Thank you for your kindness—"

"I only wish that I could do it for you," said the Baroness, "and save you from a painful but necessary task. Anyhow I have given you a pretty strong proof of confidence, for if Lady Rossden were to know what advice I have given, she would never speak to me again, and the whole county would take her part."

They turned in different directions. The Baroness, wishing to be "out of the way" just then, went through a gate that led across meadows to Grumley Green. The Pearl went back to the house and into the small room beyond the library, where, as she had expected, Augustus Twerleby was having afternoon tea with his affectionate aunt.

The modern institution of afternoon tea is productive of talking that may be intellectual or stupid, amusing in various ways or dull in all ways, good in various proportions or bad in a contemptible way and varying in amount only; but dramatic it is not, as a rule. Nevertheless, when Twerleby saw the Pearl come in, pale with the pallor of death, but showing fixity of purpose in every feature, he shrank within himself, as far as he could without impossibly annihilating himself, and felt such a prickly heat, that what he had felt on other occasions of climbing down, was comparatively nothing. Lady Rossden, though naturally not perceptive, saw that what appeared to threaten was not nothing but something very much, and sat uncomfortably, hoping for the best. The Pearl came forward and said:

"I must and will read my father's codicil."

"But my dear," said Lady Rossden, "he arranged it so,

and sealed the thing, you know, and told Augustus all about it."

"He never said anything about it to me," said the Pearl, "and he never kept anything from me. I will not act on the alleged words of that codicil, unless I see them with my own eyes."

"What can I do?" said Twerleby, with more unction than befitted the crisis. "Your father made me promise—"

This was true, so far; but the Pearl prevented the impending lie by interruption of the sentence.

"He never spoke to me about it," said the Pearl, "and I don't believe that he wrote it in that codicil."

"Oh! my dear Margaret," said Lady Rossden. "I never did, never should, never could,—oh! *do* think and consider, and—"

"I have thought and considered," said the Pearl, "till I can bear no more. I must either read the codicil or break off the half engagement that was forced upon me by an appeal to my immense love for my father. This is my last word about the question."

Whatever Lady Rossden might have thought or considered further, Twerleby was quite sure that he must go to the cabinet, remove the codicil and somehow disperse the troubles that crowded before him. But how could he bring the codicil into the small room without showing it to the Pearl, or show it to her without showing that he had told a lie? He was much tempted to put it in his pocket, as mislaid, and make it undergo a substantial change by means of fire, which he had purposed within himself to do just before his marriage; but, on going into the library and opening the secret drawer, he found a remedy waiting for him, such as it was. The codicil was not there; and when he considered the evident fact in very uncomfortable amazement, he uncomfortably asked himself who had taken it, what had become of it, when and how it might turn up unpleasantly. For a while he was bewildered, frightened out of his wits, and even doubted his own clear recollection of having put the dreadful documents in that place that very afternoon.

"Devil take the thing and the whole thing!" he thought. "Surely, I—yes I did, unless I have lost my head. But how? and who? and why? No one in the house knows

of its existence—except one. Could she—Margaret? and then ask me for it? No, but then who? Where *can* it be?”

As a fact it was in the Baroness Diabolouski's bedroom, and its place of safety was a locked writing case of black leather whose key was in her pocket, at or near Grumley Green: but that was no use to him ignorant.

Time passed, and the Pearl was waiting, and Lady Rossden assuring, and he trying in vain to excogitate a way out. At last Lady Rossden could bear the suspense no longer, and came after him, saying in doleful accents:

“My dear Augustus, why *are* you so long! *Do* let her see the thing and have done with it.”

“I only wish that I could have done with it,” said he, “I wish that I had never had it.”

“What *is* the matter?” said she.

“Why, it's gone. I put it here, and it isn't here.”

“Oh, but it must—”

“No, it isn't. Look.

“Well, I never did—I shall send for the police—”

“Don't, whatever you do. They couldn't find it out, and they would only be suspecting no one knows who. The thing is a mystery. No one besides myself knows the way of opening this drawer, except perhaps Margaret.”

“How very odd! very! What is to done?”

“Nothing. But you had better say how it is—”

“I? Certainly not. *You* must.”

“No, I can't—I really can't. The position is too distressing—it is indeed.”

He closed up the secret drawer, shut the cabinet, and began to go away, but not towards the small room beyond. Lady Rossden started in pursuit, saying as loud as she prudently could, “Stop! Isn't it as bad for me?”

“Not at all,” said Twerleby, retreating fast. “You had nothing to do with it, and I had.”

“Yes: but I might be supposed,” she said, running after him. “It really is too—”

But the faster she ran, the faster did he run, not even stopping to shut the door, but increasing the distance between her and him till he had locked the door of his bedroom from the inside, ready to be ill in case of pressure from without. Lady Rossden drew a long breath and walking up to the nearest window stared at the sky.

"This is dreadfully awkward," she said to herself, "dreadfully awkward, and most annoying, and places me in such a position before her! He ought to have stayed. But really I can't wonder at him, poor fellow. Who can have taken it? It could not have walked away. There was no one else who knew the place. I see. But oh! Really I couldn't have believed—"

She then drew another long breath, went back into the small room, and said in a reproachful voice:

"He was so upset by it all that he couldn't speak of the dreadful, dreadful misfortune. Oh! it is too dreadful. The codicil is missing. He put it away in a drawer of the oak cabinet. Do *you* know anything about it?"

"How can I know anything about it?" said the Pearl. "It was not in my keeping."

"I only asked," said Lady Rossden, "because no one else besides him knows how to open it."

"Do you mean," said the Pearl, "that I took it?"

"Oh! no. I don't mean to say that. But you *should* make it right, I *do* think."

"How can I make it right?"

"Well, my dear, it was his misfortune, not his fault. You really ought to believe his word. You really ought," she repeated after a pause.

"I have said my last word about that," answered the Pearl. "I have nothing more to say."

"Well," said Lady Rossden, walking away and opening the further door, "it looks very odd, I *must* own, *very*. You *will* go against your father's wish: and when he wrote it down with his own hand. The thing disappears—and nobody but yourself knew where to find it."

She turned once on the other side of the door, and retreating backwards, repeated, "It looks very odd, I *must* own—very; and it is so dreadfully cruel to poor, poor Augustus."





CHAPTER LIII.

A CHAPTER EXPLANATORY OF THE PEARL'S CONDITION, WITH REFERENCE TO THE BARONESS DIABOLOUSKI'S ARRANGEMENTS.



WHEN Lady Rossden said, in reference to the lost codicil, "it looks very odd," she said what was conditionally true: for if the Pearl had been someone else, quite different from what she was, the removal of that which in no manner could remove itself, would have looked very odd indeed, with much unpleasantness of inference. But the condition was wanting, and inasmuch as Lady Rossden knew that, or might have known it had she examined her own knowledge, the remark was unjust and its meaning objectionable. She adhered to it, however, and showed her meaning in that way against which there is no defence—the way of implicit reproach, or moral boycotting by silence and black looks, maintained day after day, at every meal, even before the servants.

The Pearl had a strong character, and she had worked herself up to a conclusive decision under great difficulties; but, after all, she was a helpless girl, completely alone, struggling against odds that she had not offered, and conditionally friendless, with the further disadvantage of having a false friend cleverly befriending her in her extreme need. Yet all this would have been as nothing, if the foundations of moral strength had not been shaken by religious doubts, poisonously mingled with incipient faith.

Silence and black looks are like an infected atmosphere, that everywhere is, yet offers no apparent resistance. If you say anything against it, you find nothing intelligible to attack or defend: but when, wearied out by spiteful stupidity, you say no more, you are again smothered by a pestilent something, for which there is neither a name nor a remedy.

But if religious doubts were the proximate cause of an exceptional weakness, that laid her open exceptionally to the influence of silence and black looks, the remote cause had been made for her, or rather against her, by hints and artificial appearances against Oswald, begun in Rome and continued as long as they were required. The result of that was disbelief in him: the result of which was disbelief in his Faith: and the last result was disbelief in the certainty of truth. This was a necessary consequence of having divine Faith nipped in the bud, because divine Faith, given when we are old enough to receive it intelligently, takes to itself and sublimates the religious belief that we had in us before: so that privation of divine Faith, when we have had it, brings us face to face with agnosticism. The difference in her case was that she had not acted deliberately, nor with a clear intention: and that is proved by the fact that she longed for what she disbelieved.

The Baroness Diabolouski saw this and considered it, but decided that she had better not know. For if she were known to know, she must either say something or not. If she said nothing, the Pearl would lose confidence in her, and possibly therefore suspect the motive of her good advice about the codicil. If she said something, the something must be either definite or indefinite. If indefinite, it would not be acceptable; if definite, it must be either in a catholic or a protestant sense. Preach Protestantism to the Pearl she could not—the words would have morally choked her—but how could she advocate the truth that she was rejecting? And then the Pearl, if helped into the Church of God, would be likely to see other things differently, including the things relating to Oswald. The Baroness would not submit to that; for, although she had finally fixed her matrimonial intention on a last resource presenting advantages and offering an ultimatum in Ilsetshire, she would not—and in a manner could not—be the means, even indirectly,

of helping Oswald to marry the Pearl. Moreover her arrangements at Maplethorpe required the maintenance of the *status quo*. The codicil was safe, and so was Twerleby: but the latter ought to be within reach, and might not, if the Pearl knew too much. Decidedly the *status quo* must be maintained.

Twerleby was in a permanent state of prickly heat, not knowing when the codicil might reappear, he read by the Pearl, and convict him of telling a lie to entrap her: nor when he might happen to be forcibly appropriated by the Baroness present and energizing. But Lady Rossden would not hear of his going to Norway.





CHAPTER LIV.



HEN Twerleby had been diminished enough by protracted fear of detection and appropriation, the Baroness Diabolouski, making an occasion, approached him in a comforting and remedial way, when they met near Grumley Green, five days after the disappearance of the codicil.

"You are wearied out," she said, "and so am I; but Lady Rossden is right. You must *not* go to Norway, nor anywhere, as things are. You *must* remain here, and keep up your dignity as a man unjustly suspected by a foolish girl—yes, a foolish girl, not worth a thought. There is nothing in her."

Twerleby had a stinging remembrance of perceiving too much in her, but he only said: "I can't help it."

"True," said the Baroness, "but you can help yourself and help others to help you. Lady Rossden is on your side about the lost codicil: Margaret will never speak of it, for fear of letting her former consent be known. A story of that sort always tells against a girl."

"So far," said Twerleby, "you have put the case as it is. But you forget that I cannot forget what has happened. It affects my character in her estimation, and that is enough."

"Not at all," said the Baroness. "What do you really care for her estimation? You may have imagined yourself in love with her after proposing, because it was the orthodox thing to do: but strictly, between ourselves, you were attracted by her as the heiress of Maplethorpe, not as Margaret Malmains. You will never get possession of her

in either sense of the word : but you *may* inherit Maplethorpe."

"What *do* you mean?" said Twerleby, "she is younger than me, and she is sure to marry some one, sooner or later."

"No doubt. But suppose that she were to marry a foreigner. In that case (I am told) the estate would come to you, and the personal property remain hers. Is it not so?"

"It is. My uncle did that as a check to absenteeism. But it does not affect me practically."

"Not at this moment. But it *might*."

"Yes : and she *might* die of some illness next week, or be killed by a bull broken loose. Her marrying a foreigner is just as unlikely. But I must be walking on. I have letters to write for the post."

"Why should it be so unlikely?" said the Baroness, keeping pace with him.

"She never would," said Twerleby. "Her father's dislike to it would be a danger signal warning her off beforehand."

"Do you know so little of human nature?" said the Baroness. "She would suppose herself to be safe, and think nothing at all about it, till she was conscious of the attraction. And then it would be too late. She would find plausible reasons why she ought to do it—why her father would have wished it. I can assure you that girls have a marvellous talent for that sort of pleading."

"Where is she to meet this fascinating foreigner?" said Twerleby laughing without mirth.

"Should you or should you not," said the Baroness, "be glad, if he were found—if she were so married, and you came in for this property?"

"You ask me a question," said Twerleby, "that cannot be answered with a mere yes or no. Your scholastic friend at Hunterscombe would say *Distinguendum est*. Of course I should like to have the property ; but to get it by her loss is another thing."

"It's being another thing," said the Baroness "would not interfere with your appreciating Maplethorpe, nor impede your action, if you saw a way of helping yourself to possess it by her marrying a foreigner. I know you too well to

believe that, and you know me too well not to know that I never talk nonsense. You want Maplethorpe. There is no question about that; or (between ourselves) you would not have wanted to keep the contents of the codicil from the person most concerned in it, till she with her property should be yours. You *do* want Maplethorpe. You have a *right* to want it. You are next in the entail, and you are a man, and you are the most fitted for it in every way. You *do* want it, and your only way of getting it is *that* way. Perhaps I shall be able to help you: but you must co-operate with me. Will you do it?"

"What shall you be wanting me to do?" said Twerleby.

"Nothing," said she. "Only leave me to act, and feel sure that I am doing the best for you."

Twerleby wished that someone else would do it for him—anyone else, except the General Foreigner. He was afraid of declining the offer—afraid of accepting it.

"The story about the codicil," said she, "the words in it that no one had seen or heard of, and its mysterious disappearance when you were called upon to show it, will certainly ooze out; and the longer Margaret remains unmarried, with you and Lady Rosden for her guardians, the more will the whole thing be believed. But if she marries pretty soon (the sooner the better) and loses the property by marrying a foreigner, the good people of Ilsetshire will say: 'I don't believe a word of it. She always was an odd girl. People *are* so ill-natured, &c.' To speak plainly, your character is at stake. There is only one other way out of it; and that is, *to produce the codicil, and show that you told the truth about its contents.*"

Twerleby found himself walking faster by instinct of self-preservation; for he knew not how much the Baroness might somehow happen to know about the things contained within the sealed envelope somehow abstracted.

"How *can* I produce it," he said, "when I don't know where it is, nor who could have taken it?"

They were now in the shrubbery by reason of their fast walking, which indeed was so fast, especially then, that the Baroness had to pause for breath, while Twerleby, seizing the advantage, lengthened and quickened his own strides. At last she said:

"Wait a moment and listen, and then go on by yourself.

It is not fitting that I should be seen walking alone with you in earnest conversation."

Twerleby shuddered and shook at this relative estimate, but under moral compulsion listened obediently.

"You can't produce it," she said, "because you say you don't know where it is: and if you could, you might or might not be able to show that it means what you meant it to be understood to mean. Don't be startled by that. We understand each other perfectly, and agree perfectly. I say that you can't produce it, and therefore that your character is at stake; so much so that you will quite lose it—quite—unless Margaret's marriage with a foreigner gets you out of the mess, as your neighbours would call it, by throwing people off the scent. It remains for you to decide whether you will let me help you out of the mess or not."

She turned away, and he turned anywhere, muttering: "I must." He never suspected, (for how could he?) that all the while she had the codicil in her writing box. Had he suspected that, he would have cursed the imaginary foreigner and gone to Norway.

He never suspected her of doing that, but Monica did, and expressed her opinion to *Suprême* the younger in the kitchen garden, whither they had gone in search of herbs, he for the table and she for the cure of a cold. There they met; and Monica, looking up suddenly from a bunch of camomile that she had just picked, said in a low voice:

"I tell you what. It's my belief that the Baroness took it."

"I shall believe of her all that you shall wish," answered *Suprême*. "But what took she?"

"Why, that codicil."

"Without doubt, but I know not the word."

"Something of a will. It's written afterwards, when they've got something more to say."

"But the will—what is it?"

"Bless you! Why it's what the lawyers make, for people to show how their property is to go."

"Ah! the *Testament*."

"That's it. Well, there was a codicil here, and Mr. Twerleby had charge of it, and our young lady wanted to

see it, of course. Who had so good a right, I should like to know, as she, his only daughter?"

Suprême, puzzled at the curious relationship implied, but confident in Monica, answered boldly "yes. Who shall dare to oppose himself to it?"

"It was her father's will, of course, and the codicil too," said Monica, by way of explanation. "Well, she wanted to see it—of course—"

"Of course," echoed Suprême.

"Don't interrupt," said Monica, "or the Baroness will be coming round the corner. He went for it, and couldn't find it. So, there it was—"

"That is well," said Suprême. "She shall have read it."

"No no," said Monica. "I meant that it wasn't there, and nobody knew what to say, because (don't you see?) it couldn't have walked off."

"Nothing of more true," said Suprême. "It has not of legs. It has not of wings. What will you that it do?"

"How odd you talk!" said Monica. "But never mind. I know what you mean. Well, you see, this codicil is missing; and who can tell what's in it, and what mischief may be done with it?"

"Where has he put it?" said Suprême.

"He put it in the library."

"Yes, but in some place—is it not?"

"In the oak cabinet, he told her."

"And the cabinet—was it *fermé à clef*?"

"Locked you mean—I don't know about that: but the codicil was in a secret drawer that you can't open unless you know how. I heard her Ladyship talking about it."

"Ah! That goes to think. It is my opinion to me that someone has seen him open the drawer. Nothing of more easy than to go after and open it."

"Just so. And there's a place upstairs, where anybody can look straight down on that cabinet—it's a little window, right at the end of the gallery, beyond the housemaid's closet. No one knows of it but me: for my young lady drew aside the panel, and showed it to me one day, and told me not to talk about it. But I daresay the Baroness may know of that window, for one day, when I was passing by, I caught sight of her in that housemaid's closet. She

peeps about everywhere, making believe, all the while, that she doesn't."

"She is capable of all, I think," said Suprême, lowering his voice to a whisper. "There are of them too much in Paris. *Mais il me semble—*"

"Get along with your gibberish," interrupted Monica.

"Pardon," said he. "It was the prudence, are you well sure that Monsieur Twerleby has not the codicil? Wherefore has he not given it before to Meess?"

"Well, I never!" said Monica. "That *would* be—"

"Ils s'entendent fort bien, je crois,—lui et Madame la Baronne."

"*She* has it, I am sure of that," said Monica. "And *you* must help me to find it for our young lady."

"I shall do all for you," answered Suprême. "But it shall be difficult. It is not permitted to me to enter in their chambers and make a *perquisition*. What shall I do?"

"I don't know just yet," said she. "But it's all wrong—the whole thing—wrong and wicked. Among them they have tricked and misled that dear sweet young lady—poisoned her mind—"

As was then being proved more decisively than before, while Monica, interrupted by an under-gardener with a wheelbarrow was turning homewards, Suprême remaining to gather the herbs that he wanted, and Oswald riding down the hill that led to the ford.

A letter from Father Bramsby announcing the departure of the Baroness from Hunterscombe, and one from Cubton inviting his presence there had reached him in London on the same day; and he decided on going to Cubton for two purposes, one for a friend, the other for the Pearl and himself together. His presence at Cubton was useful to Fetherhed, who wishing to propose as soon as possible, and fearing to seem precipitate, wanted a friendly guest there, to be and not be in the way. In that respect Oswald was there, as if not there, and Fetherhed progressed even to the proposing point, which by that time had been reached and passed satisfactorily; but Oswald's purpose for the Pearl and himself affected the purpose of his life, the quality of her's and the happiness of both. He had been told that she was engaged—he scarcely believed it, but it determined him to seek her again till they met, and for her sake, as well

as for his own, then and there enforce an explanation. So he had mounted again and after an hour's ride was again riding down the hill that leads to the ford, while she was riding up. The place where they met was the very spot where he had saved her life. Everything was there as before, except the dusk and the wintry aspect of the trees that now were green, for it was the month of May.

"'This," he said to himself, "will and must be final—absolutely final."

She cantered up the incline till her horse was within three lengths of his, and then came to a slow walk. He pulled up, across the road and almost in front of her, taking off his hat. Her face was deadly pale, but she deliberately looked at him and passed by.

Half-an-hour afterwards Mr. Blastmore received a twisted-up note, written in pencil on a leaf torn from a pocket book. Oswald had given it to a groom when dismounting, and then walked away from the house. The note ran thus :

"I am obliged suddenly to go home. I will come back soon. There is nothing to alarm anyone ; but I must be off to be in time for the train."

"Confound it," said Mr. Blastmore. "What can it be?"

"I've got a suspicion," said Fetherhed. "There's a something wrong at Maplethorpe. She liked him, as anyone could see ; and it went wrong when her father died. I'm sure of that, though he never says a word about them. There's been a something, you may depend upon it."

"It's that Baroness, I'll swear ;" said Mr. Blastmore. "What a beastly fool I was to be taken in by her and get her invited to Hunterscombe ! I'll be even with them one of these days—mark my words,—but what's to be done now ? That's the question."

"I don't quite see," said Fetherhed, "what you could do just now, I don't. But there's another thing that may have been taken advantage of to make a rumpous and set her wrong about him. Somebody—whether it was Devilwousky, or that chap who hasn't got a native country, or somebody else, perhaps Twerleby, who hates him as the devil hates holy water, I don't know—but somebody got it whispered about that he had been engaged or privately married before. He never knew of that. I thought of

telling him about it, and then I didn't like to bother him, because it didn't get believed. But now I wish I had."

"Just like me," said Mr. Blastmore, "I was wrong. One should always tell a fellow, if one hears anything against him, and then he can look out. Well, well—we must see what can be done. But I was going to say that it seems to me that you and Gertrude are getting on—"

"I hope so," said Fetherhed.

"And so do I," said Mr. Blastmore. "I should like it, and so let's go to the point. I can't boast of blood, but I like it and believe in it. You can tell your father what sort of a fellow I am, and what Gertrude is: for she's all that, and no mistake, though I oughtn't to say it. And you can tell him too, that she wont be wanting in tin. I'll give you the figures for him to-morrow morning. But I must be off now, to look at a four-year old three miles on the other side of the ford."

While Mr. Blastmore, having ridden to the place, three miles to the other side of the ford, and bought the four-year-old after much examination and some bargaining, returned home in time to dress for dinner, Oswald, on foot, was half way to Osmundsbury. He was going there, in preference to the nearer station, because he had need of time and solitude.

"All is over," he thought. "All, except that which the world can neither give nor take away."

So it seemed, as far as he could know: but, in fact, the Pearl was broken hearted about him, having been made to believe that he had been falsely engaged or falsely married to Miss Warringford, and afterwards refused by the Baroness Diabolouski.





CHAPTER LV.



TWERLEBY had condemned himself against his will, not only to remain, for an unknown length of time, in a state of prickly heat, but also to have acute attacks of the same unexpectedly. One of them attacked him after a few days of comparative ease, when Lady Rosdden, opening her eyes with an expression of indefinite meaning that made him mutely exclaim, "What is it?" said in a pleasant way,

"My dear Augustus, I was just thinking we ought to call on *that Miss Warringford*."

Twerleby felt as if the metaphorical thunderbolt had fallen on him. You might, as an old saying has it, have knocked him down with a feather. He said nothing, but thought of Norway.

"What *is* the matter?" said Lady Rosdden.

"Nothing at all," said he. "I was only thinking that you might meet the man you don't wish to meet."

"He is not there now," said Lady Rosdden, "I know that for certain. But he will be to-morrow. It must be done. She is the lady of the house, and Mr. Blastmore expects it. We must go there to-day."

"Why should *I* go? I have to ride in another direction."

"Never mind. You can do that to-morrow. It would look so odd, when you have never been there. You really must, my dear. I daresay they will be out. I have ordered the carriage at a quarter to three, and it only wants ten minutes of the time. Besides you know Mr. Blastmore

will never marry. Don't you know that he had a disappointment when he was quite young and never would, and she will have, they say, three or four thousand a year, and a large allowance in his lifetime when she marries? You know, my dear, you really ought to think of that, for you have been very expensive, and owing to this unfortunate twist about the codicil, Margaret won't listen to reason about you."

This cheerful view of the case turned the prickly heat into a cold perspiration: and well it might, because he was the man who attempted the false marriage, was ignominiously sent about his business and had to go away with his responsibility, but not with her. Was it not enough to have the over-ruled guilt and the unrepenting shame and the fear of discovery? Must he be introduced as a stranger and forced into her society? But then—she had money and he had debts, and the Baroness Diabolouski was domiciled at Maplethorpe. Could he—? What? face her detesting him? rather live in Norway the rest of his life.

The danger was imminent because the horses were being put to; but necessity, having no law, goes its own way, and the necessitated have to go with it. Within a quarter of an hour Twerleby found himself in the carriage, considering whether he should jump out further on and then run away after a supposititious dog hunting sheep, or be taken ill half way to the lodge and walk home in a feeble manner, or drive on prepared to face it out and ignore his own identity. He chose the latter course, telling himself that he *would* not be recognised, but hoping fervently that she would not be at home.

It turned out that she was at home, and that Mr. Blastmore was at home, and that Fetherhed was very much at home, while Twerleby was very much not at home, wishing himself at home without Lady Rossden as an uncomfortable monitor, and without the Baroness Diabolouski appropriating.

The worst of it was that he could make nothing of Miss Warringford in reference to himself as known or as unknown. Apparently she had never seen him till then, yet he could not persuade himself to believe it. She looked at him, and that look was enough to make him feel morally transparent. Thus "conscience doth make cowards

of us all," that is, all whom it convicts of what the world can punish. As a fact she did not recognize him then, but only saw something that reminded and puzzled her. There was a likeness in the features ; but the dark hair and, most of all, the beard had altered their expression so much that identity was not apparent. Had he trusted to this, and, in a manner of speaking, left well alone, he would have passed finally as not identical with the other man, but he betrayed himself by saying too little and speaking in a voice deeper than his own. She detected the artificial quality of his voice and therefore the cause of his silence, made him talk by talking to him, till, in his nervousness, he spoke in his natural voice without being aware of it. When she had done that, she said no more to him directly, but leaving him to Fetherhed, and Mr. Blastmore to Lady RosSDen, became a listener in readiness.

"I hope they gave you my note," said Mr. Blastmore. "The note I sent—let me see, it must have been three weeks or a month ago. It was delivered, I know, because I gave it to my second horseman ; and I'll answer for his doing whatever he goes at."

Lady RosSDen felt an excessive longing to go at the door, but that would have made the note go against her, and the whole visit go wrong.

"I am so glad," she said, "that you have mentioned it. I didn't write at the time ; and then so many things came in the way—"

"That they do," said Mr. Blastmore. "I hate writing notes. It's all right. No doubt you contradicted the thing."

"Well, we haven't had any one at Maplethorpe since. But I might just write a line to a lady who, I think, had heard it. I can write by this post, if I go home now."

"That's right, but it isn't wanted now. Nobody believes it."

"Yes—but I shouldn't like not to do something."

"There's nothing like doing something," said Fetherhed. "Better late than never."

Lady RosSDen heard this as not hearing, and presently departed, after kissing Miss Warringford in token of personal regard ; but when she was in the carriage and out of hearing from the house, pent-up irritation appeared.

"I *must* own," she said, "that I never should have

expected you to be so unlike yourself,—sitting there and looking like a fool while she was talking to you, and losing all your opportunity, when it really is so very important, with all your debts and Margaret's refusal and the awkwardness of that codicil,—that people will suppose you have made up, unless you show that you didn't by marrying an heiress just about the same time. You *had* a chance—I could see that by her talking to you so ; but there you sat, saying a word or two now and then, as if you had rather not, and in such a very odd voice most of the time. What *did* you do *that* for, in the name of wonder ? It must have seemed so strange and unaccountable, especially to Mr. Fetherhed, who knows you so well. I can't imagine what you *could* have been thinking of. If you don't mind, he will be taking your chance away from you. I am afraid that he will. He is making up to her, I could see that. And now he can turn you into ridicule before her, and imitate your voice, and perhaps make Mr. Blastmore put *that* story on *you* to clear Mr. Bramsby. All I can do is to ask her to stay at Maplethorpe for a week—which is very inconvenient with Margaret so odd and you not able to find the codicil,—which would get you into trouble, if she were to make a fuss about it ; and she will, I can tell you, unless you show that you have given up all hope of her by marrying some one else, which you can't do without money, expensive as you are, but *had* the chance of doing, and perhaps may have, even now, thanks to me. I shall ask her by herself, and you must make the most of it, and make way with her. You can, if you choose, and it *is*—it is indeed—of the utmost importance to you in *every* way. Yes, you really *must*. There, that will do. You see how it is. You can't fail to see it—and so I won't say any more about it, just now."

These last words were comparatively comforting ; but the evil day was only put off. Come it would, and with it the terrifying dilemma, that seemed like two living and intelligent bodies threatening with equal force. His only escape from the presence of this was absence of himself : but he dared not offend Lady RosSDen, who sat gravely in the carriage, continuing to say no more, while Miss Warringford was walking with Fetherhed between the entrance gates at Cubton.

When they had taken one turn up and down, Miss Warrington said : " I have something to tell you—something that you must hear, and no one else."

" I shall like it all the more for that," said Fetherhed.

" And so should I," said she, " if it were not painful for you to hear."

" Painful? Not a bit of it. I know what you mean. You told me all about it."

" Yes : but there is one thing more, which I never knew till now."

" A conclusive reason for not telling it before. What is it?"

" You must promise me," she said, " that you will never do anything about it and never tell it to anyone."

" If you tell me not," said Fetherhed, " that's enough. I see. Wasn't it Twerleby? I thought so when he looked so rotten, and sat in the dark, and spoke in a queer voice like a cabby with a cold. I'll be as mum as a mouse : but he had better look out, or he'll find himself married to that Baroness, whether he likes it or not. She's up to something at Maplethorpe. I can see that."

And so could Twerleby, who therefore tried to be out of her way as soon as he was out of Lady Rossden's. The Baroness, however, tracked him to a wood on the opposite side of the park, and came upon him unawares.

" So you have been trotted out," she said, " and shown to Miss Warrington. How did she like you this time, without the fair hair and the beardless face?"

" If you again insinuate that," said Twerleby, in a hollow voice, " I shall leave here this afternoon and go to Kansas or the Rocky Mountains. I will not stay to be under a calumny, that anyone can repeat and I cannot possibly disprove."

" As to the calumny," she said, " (for so I prefer to call it,) you may be quite sure that it never will be repeated, if it depends on me. You *must* know that. But you and I know how it was, in fact : and we know that you had better not be recognized at a certain place not far off. Your aunt wants you to marry that heiress, as such, and for no other reason : and she means to invite her for that purpose very soon. Hasn't she told you that?"

" She *may* want it," said Twerleby, " but I won't."

"Nonsense," answered the Baroness. "Remember what she is to you, and what she is when opposed, and how expensive you have been. You mustn't dream of opposing her openly: but you must persuade her that she wants change of air. If the young lady, who had better not see you too much, would go on a visit somewhere—"

"She said that she was going away," muttered Twerleby, "who felt so anxious for help that his dignity was nowhere."

"Then," said she, "you must press that, and make Lady RosSDen seem to be taking advantage of it. Put something before her in London, and make her go there with you for three weeks or so—old friends (who never cared about her), society (where she would be a bore), new pictures because they are hung at the Royal Academy—anything you like. I shall tell her that she looks worn and wants a change. She has let her house there this year, I know, but she has often gone to those rooms in—"

"Very well," said Twerleby, recovering himself a little, and striving to seem unconcerned. "It will serve to put off match-making till Fetherhed has made the match for himself, if he has not done so already. There was every appearance of it."

"I suspected that by his being there so long," said she. "It will save you from a *very* awkward pressure, but not without the three weeks in London. When you come back, the engagement will be known, and Lady RosSDen will be quiet. Even if she *should* recognize you then—of course she would keep the fact to herself,—for—"

"But my aunt must know first that they are engaged," said Twerleby, "or she won't go."

"She can't know it before they give it out," said the Baroness, "and if it were rumoured she would not believe it, but only push you on worse than before, to be solemnly snubbed. I will point out in delicate words that she would be showing her cards, if she made so much of the well dowered young lady all at once. You have lost your chance of that fortune irretrievably, and Mr. Fetherhed saves you from worse by carrying off the prize just when you have discovered its value. You mustn't complain of that, nor of your failure about Margaret. Why couldn't you make up to her like a man, when she was angry with the other,

instead of trying to make her believe a story that no girl in her senses would have believed?"

"I didn't," he bellowed, quite losing his self control at this unpleasantly plain statement.

"*Oh!*" said she. "You shouldn't say that."

"Where is the fascinating foreigner that you talked of?" said Twerleby.

"Where I can find him," said the Baroness, "but I don't know that I will. You are not deserving of it."

"You promised, you know," said Twerleby, climbing down in voice and manner.

"You don't deserve it," said the Baroness, "but I will. And now as we have settled that, I had better go home by this way, further round, and you by the other, because it would not be advisable for us to be seen talking together here."

Twerleby needed no second admonition, but walked away as directed, wondering how she could know so much about him as to find all *that* out, and wishing that he might never meet her again anywhere. The Baroness departed by the way farther round, saying to herself:

"Yes, we have settled that, or rather I settled it for him—and for me, as I have made myself, or allowed myself to be made. There he goes—a miserable specimen of what a man can become who once had better things in him. There he goes, as contemptible to himself as he is to me, with whom he will have to be joined in desecrated marriage at a registrar's office. Into what depths of meanness has he fallen! he, who, ten years ago, risked all, or nearly all for the Faith! He has practically renounced that, and fallen consequently. So have I, but not as he has. I had gone too far. I had bound myself in chains of adamant. But I could have broken them, if the one man that I could have loved completely and depended on with all my terrible will, naturally and supernaturally, had responded to the awful cry of longing despair that forced itself out of me. But it was not to be. I had gone too far. I must go on to the end—the end that is the beginning of what never will end, never can end—the beginning of endless despair, the retribution of the self-condemned, who, having finally said, with full knowledge and consent, *non serviam*, fix themselves, *as I do*, to their final choice, till for them choice is no more—no more but only *that*."

She hurried on through the wood, crossed the park at the same pace, and went into the house, hating every one in it by reason of hating herself as she desperately willed herself to be.





CHAPTER LVI.



THE great Stagyrte remarks in his Nicomedian ethics that what one does through a friend is, in a manner, done by oneself—*τὰ γὰρ ἐὰ τῶν φίλων ἐὶ ἑμῶν πως ἐστίν*—and this was exemplified by Twerleby when he went with Lady Rossden to London, leaving the Baroness Diabolouski to utilize the fascinating foreigner for his benefit, while she was altruistically utilizing him for her own. The mysterious lady-killer did not appear in person, having no personal existence; but, *mirabile dictu*, the General Foreigner did, and without any opposition from the Baroness. In fact he had been invited by her, and instructed to come at a given hour of a given day.

Shortly before this, when the Pearl had come in from her daily ride, the Baroness walked with her a little way up and down. By dint of talking, the walk was protracted till they saw a small man, dressed in extremely cut clothes, walking up to the house.

The General Foreigner, (for he it was, of course!) approached in a reverential manner, too excessive, and with a grand sweep of his right arm took off his hat, till it appeared to be standing out by itself at a distance of half a yard from his right knee.

"How very provoking!" thought the Baroness. "He *never will* be presentable. And those dreadful clothes, that look as if he had bought them out of a shop window in Regent Street."

"Do be quiet," she whispered, going forward to meet

him. "You are overdoing it."

The General Foreigner disliked the wording of the admonition, and indeed felt offended: but he took the hint.

"This is my first opportunity," he said, "of paying my respect to you, since I had the honour of dining here nearly five months ago. I am at Backwater for a few days, and so I thought that I would profit by the occasion. Also I have the sad pleasure of offering to you my most sincere condolences. My short acquaintance with your good father was sufficient to show me his most noble character. But perhaps I have said too much. It may revive your grief."

"No," said the Pearl, "you cannot revive that which is not dead. It must always give me pleasure to hear of my father being appreciated. But won't you come in?"

"I fear to be shortening your walk," said he, following the Pearl into the library.

"Have you had luncheon?" said she, "may I order some?"

"I have lunched at Osmundsbury," said he. "Many thanks. But we were talking about your father. I remember that evening so well. It has clung to my memory. How beautifully he reasoned! his arguments against Anglican orders were complete in a few words."

"He never could tolerate that humbug," said the Pearl.

"C'est le mot. And also it is contrary to the teaching of the reformers. He cited them against it—"

"Yes, as witnesses, but without any respect for them."

The General Foreigner, finding himself at fault, and not knowing how to get information without spoiling the spontaneous agreement that he wanted to conjure up, said boldly, "Just so. He thought of them as I do. History has shown them in their true colours. But I fear that I must not stay. I lost my way in coming, and am later than I thought." He looked at his watch, and added "I must catch the train and have only just time. I have the honour of thanking you for your kind reception of me."

Saying that he retired, bowing in a modified degree.

Hat, body and limbs were less obtrusive in their demonstration of respect, but the clothes could not be suppressed, owing to the excessiveness of their cut; and therefore the Baroness Diabolouski proceeded to explain them away.

“What a pity,” she said, “that he hasn’t a wife to make him dress properly ! He thinks of everything except that. I was quite ashamed of him as an acquaintance of mine, in spite of his being the highly cultivated man that he is.”

“Well, I thought that his outward appearance was rather odd,” said the Pearl. “It is a pity, as you say.”

Whereupon she said no more about him. Why he had come, with the Baroness Diabolouski’s consent, merely to pay a very short and unnecessary visit, five months after dining there from Blumbury, no one but he and she could say. Certain it is that from that day forth, she never mentioned his name.





CHAPTER LVII.



HEN Lady Rossden heard in London, a fortnight after her change of air, that Fetherhed and Miss Warringford were engaged, she scolded Twerleby for not having done his best, and then decided on not going home so soon as she had intended. Twerleby rejoiced in a modified way, and wished success to the fascinating foreigner. He continued to wish in that sense, while the fascinating foreigner had as yet done nothing for him, having no personal existence and therefore no personal power of action. (*Operari sequitur esse.*)

Another week passed, and now it was nearly the end of June. Fetherhed was to be married in July, and rejoiced thereat without any modification. Gertrude Warringford was happy in her engagement. She had accepted him for his true devotion, and ended by loving him as he was—a man to be developed and even intellectually elevated by means of his faith and his heart. Mr. Blastmore, with one of his horses, had come to Hunterscombe for a week. Oswald was much with him in presence, in talking and in sympathy, but his heart was at Maplethorpe.

The third day after Mr. Blastmore's arrival was hot, and the smell of haymaking pervaded the air. They dined early for the purpose of having a late ride in the cool of the evening, and it happened that on the same hot day the Pearl and the Baroness dined still earlier, in order to walk afterwards. But it also happened that before their walk *Suprême* took a walk; and it happened furthermore that before their walk, the Baroness Diabolouski drove in the

pony-carriage to see an old woman at Grumley Green, and that Suprême in the course of his walk, saw the pony carriage waiting under some trees in a lane, and a little further on, espied the Baroness on the other side of a hedge talking with a man in earnest colloquy.

"This shall be something," thought Suprême in English. "This man is what Monica would call a bad lot," and forthwith he crept up noiselessly along a field on the other side of the hedge and laid himself down in the ditch.

"Mia benefattrice!" said the man.

"H'm! Why speak they in Italian?" thought Suprême. "Without doubt they think to be not comprehended."

"Are you sure of not failing?" said the Baroness in Italian. "The attempt is rash: and if it breaks down, you will find yourself before long in the Isle of Portland, wearing the Queen's grey uniform and with a pair of steel ornaments round your ankles."

At this unpleasant view of his case, he fidgetted inside his garments, as if suddenly bitten by many fleas; but he recovered himself quickly, and said, "It cannot fail."

"You are very optimistic," said she. "I have warned you of the danger. If you get into trouble, it will be your fault."

"But what will you?" he said, with a gesture of impatience. "You find fault and you threaten me, but you say nothing. You tell me some better plan."

"Hush, not so loud," said the Baroness, who, like Twerleby, began to climb down. "They will hear you. I only wanted to make sure that—"

"It *cannot* fail—" he repeated. "I have arranged all I shall have come there to save her from a plot."

"Invented by yourself—" said the Baroness.

"I have not time to explain," said he, "but I shall persuade her that she must take refuge at Backwater, or somewhere farther on the coast—"

"The further the better," said the Baroness. "You must be careful."

"I have a small vessel," he said, "midway between Backwater and Hunterscombe. We shall drive straight to that little bay—you know, near Hunterscombe, where the young lady fell into the water—a boat is there waiting—off we go—all right—"

"I see," said the Baroness. "You mean to make her marry you by compromising her."

"Not so," said he. "Stratagems are allowed in love and war. She will end by great love for me when she sees my devotedness to her. You come with her this evening, at the place where we have said. I shall wait for you there—eight o'clock." And off he went in the identity of the General Foreigner. The Baroness, feeling sure that she had not been seen, returned to the lane where the carriage was waiting, and drove home at a brisk pace.

Suprême popped up from his hiding place and hurried home. When he had reached the house he went in search of Monica, and found her alone in the housekeeper's room at work near the open window.

"Oh! come out," said he from the grass border outside. "I have much to say."

"I cannot, I am very busy," said she.

"Oh! but *do* come," said he: "it must be that I speak to you now."

"Yes, I know," said she. "You're always wanting me to fix the day: but I tell you once for all I will not be married so long as the devil is having her own way here—so there. What would be the consequence? Why her ladyship would take and give me warning, and then my young lady would be left all alone to them."

"It is not that," said he: "but it is of most great importance."

"*Well*, if you think me of no importance—"

"No, no. You have not comprehended me. It is the danger—the danger to—you know who—come out quick—I cannot more say to it here."

"What is it?" said Monica, starting up and then following him to an orchard at the back of the stables.

"The Baroness," said he, "and that man who has been here, have talked and I have heard them. They spoke Italian, and I listened and hid myself in the fosse. He shall take someone in a carriage this evening to the sea, at the little bay near Hunterscombe, where the road turn off to Backwater, and—"

"What? Who?"

"I fear that they mean our young lady—"

"What? carry her off? Where from?"

"Hélas ! I could not hear that—they said no place—and the Baroness drove home, and I ran so quick—so quick—see I am all hot, but you must go find her, and tell her not to go with Madame La Baronne for a walk this evening—"

"Oh ! good gracious ! whatever shall we do ! She went out with the Baroness, it must be a quarter of an hour, or twenty minutes ago, and they're gone—I don't know where."

Suprême looked at his watch.

"It's now six o'clock," he said. I heard him say "Meet me at eight—where, I know not—and then he said that he would drive to the bay near Hunterscombe, where a boat is waiting for them, to take them to a little ship anchored off shore—"

"There is only one thing to be done," said Monica. "You must say that I was called off on a matter of life and death, and had to get away as I could and come back as soon as I can. I must go to Hunterscombe, and ask Father Bramsby and the young Squire to send men to help—"

"Yes—but you must explain that I cannot tell for certain who it is—"

"I don't think there's much doubt about that," said she. "They'd not take so much trouble for anyone else."

She ran into the house, put on a bonnet and cloak, and then, going to the stables, called the coachman.

"Do you know the way to Hunterscombe ?" said she.

"Yes, I've hunted in that country when I was a lad, and rode second horse to Lord Foxmore."

"Can you get me driven there ?" said she. "I wouldn't ask you ; only I *must* go somehow to-night."

"I could," said the coachman, "because there's a young horse that the old Squire used to drive in the dog-cart and he wants exercise. I'd drive you myself. But how about my lady ?"

"As to that," said Monica, "the horses are not my lady's, and *my* young lady will be of age and her own mistress next September. *She* would order the dogcart in a moment ; only she's out walking."

"All right," said the coachman. "I'll take you there, if you won't keep me there longer than I shall want just to give the horse a feed."

"Ten minutes will do for me," said Monica.

"Tom," said the coachman to a groom coming out of a stable door, "put the chestnut mare in the dogcart."

"Thank you," said Monica.

"Don't mention it," said the coachman. "I'll just go and get a great coat, in case of rain."

While Tom was putting to, and the coachman bringing his great coat, *Suprême* appeared on the scene, carrying a long garment lined with fur.

"What's this for?" said Monica.

"For you," said *Suprême*. "You go far, and you should have cold."

"Bless you!" said Monica. "I'm not made of barley sugar. I shouldn't know what to do with all that."

She then jumped into the dogcart, the coachman followed, and the chestnut bowed away, pulling hard.

The Pearl and the Baroness *Diabolouski* were then strolling about the park, each thinking in her own way, while both talked at intervals, till the intervals came together. Their thinking differed as much as their respective states of mind, but the adaptive Baroness assimilated her talking to that of the Pearl, as far as she could do so without abdicating her implied claim to superior knowledge and experience.

"How lovely," she said, "is a summer's evening in England! There is nothing that I admire more in nature than that long twilight, calm and peaceful, softly accentuating the landscape—except perhaps, a summer's morning. The summer evening is more reposeful, but the summer morning is more hopeful. The very air that you breathe is so balmy and so full of life. Were you ever in a wood at daybreak at this time of the year?"

"Not so early as that," said the Pearl. "But I have often been out riding with my father before six o'clock. There was a warm freshness in the air then that I never found later in the day."

"And never will find," said the Baroness. "Like the freshness of a girl's heart, while she still believes that every attractive man is a hero. It never comes again."

Having given that instance of the irrecoverable for the Pearl's benefit, the Baroness went on to say,

"Yes, it *is* worth getting up for: but a large wood at

daybreak is another thing. It rings with harmonized sights and sounds, teems with varied life and almost overwhelms you by its excess. But what gate is this?"

"If we cross the road," said the Pearl, "and go round by the windmill, we shall pass a field where they are carrying hay. Perhaps they are carrying now."

They went through the gate, and over a stile on the other side of the road, and on towards the windmill, while the Baroness expressed in poetic language her love of hay-making.

"The perfume of the hay," she began, "and the sunlit meadows—"

"When the sun is out," said the Pearl, with a very sad smile. "But we often have bad weather. If you were to ask that man walking in front, he would tell you that hay-making is 'the messingest job as is.'"

"Trouble, loss and disappointment," said the Baroness, "we cannot avoid altogether; but rural industries are the soundest, and on the whole, the most to be depended on."

"God made the country," said the Pearl, "but man is unmaking it."

"You are thoughtful beyond your age—quite beyond it," said the Baroness.

"I have lived so much with my father," said the Pearl, "talked with him of so many things, and of that among others."

"I should like to hear what he said about that," said the Baroness. "The question is most interesting."

This led to a long conversation during which they took a longer turn—the Pearl inadvertently,—so that it was sunset before they were on their way home.

"I am afraid that we shall be very late," said the Baroness, but not until they had gone some distance beyond the way intended.

"We shall," said the Pearl. "We were talking and missed the turn. We must now go across that meadow into the road, and home by the ford."

While crossing the meadow the Baroness took her pocket-handkerchief from her pocket, and with it a half sheet of note paper. The paper fell to the ground before the Pearl, who picked it up, and then let it fall, turning deadly pale.

"How stupid of me," said the Baroness, clutching it off

the ground. "I had not worn this dress for some days and forgot—yet, perhaps—"

"Perhaps what?"

"Perhaps I ought, for your sake.—"

"For my sake?" said the Pearl, snatching it violently out of her hand. "What is it to me? I had better read it, and see what it is that ought to be kept from me for my sake."

"Yes, you had better read it," said the Baroness, "you force me to say so. You know the handwriting—you must have seen it. The lines were addressed to myself, quoted for me, when I was at Hunterscombe—when, in consequence of that and of what it expresses, I left the house as quickly as I could. You *had* better read it."

"I *am* reading it," said the Pearl, "don't you see that I am?—I will shew you that I have read it. Listen."

Io sento sì d'Amor la gran possanza
Ch'io non posso durare
Lungamente a soffrire ; ond'io mi doglio ;
Perocchè il suo valor sempre s'avanza,
E'l mio sento mancare
Sì, ch'io non meno ognora ch'io non soglio,
Non dico ch'Amor faccia quant'io voglio,
Chè se facesse quanto il voler chiede,
Quella virtù, che natura mi diede,
Nol sofferia, perocch'ella è finita.
E questo e quello ond'io prendo cordoglio,
Che alla voglia il poder non terrà fede.
Ma se di buon voler nasce mercede,
To la demando per aver più vita
A que begli occhi, il cui dolce splendore
Porta conforto, ovunque io sento amore.

"I have read it—read it out ; what do you want more?"

"Nothing," said the Baroness. "It was not meant for you, nor is it what your dear father expected from the man whom he honoured with his confidence. But as you *have* read it, I must explain. It was addressed by Oswald Bramsby to *me*, and when I told him in my extreme indignation, that he was false to you, false in the worst way, false by showing without explicit words, and false before hand by his private pretended marriage with the girl that he pretended to rescue from drowning—he ran away from his own home, before I had time to leave it as a pestilent place.

Margaret, you dearest friend that I ever had, you *must* free yourself at once from that hideous dream."

"Who says that I am not free?" said the Pearl, standing for a moment on the further side of the stile.

"No one would say so now," said the Baroness, following her into the road that led down to the ford.

Nothing more was said till they had gone about a third of the way down, when the Baroness exclaimed, "What can that be? It looks like what I have heard of—the funeral procession."

"I see a carriage and nothing more," said the Pearl.

"But I see it," said the Baroness, "look! the hearse and the people on the other side of those trees—you *must* see it now—I have courage against everything except that. I can't bear it—I really can't."

"There is nothing, I assure you," said the Pearl, "but a carriage and a pair of horses coming towards us. Do come on, or we shall be in the dark."

"I can't while that terrible thing is there. Look!"

"There is nothing terrible, nothing but a fly—"

"Yes there is. I feel as if something dreadful were going to happen. Oh! why did you come this way!"

"They are close by," said the Pearl, "don't talk so loud, or they will take you for a lunatic. You must come on."

But the Baroness seized the Pearl by the arm and with every sign of terror dragged her on one side towards the clump of stunted trees, then staggered and fell on her face apparently senseless.

At this moment two men who had been lying concealed behind the trees, hidden by rough grass and brambles, rushed forward and seized the Pearl. They crammed a handkerchief into her mouth, tied another over her face and then hurried away up the hill, dragging her after them.

"Push on, Bill, to the gate," said one, "we must get the other side of the hedge, till that bloody carriage has gone by."

"Drive on as fast as you can," said a voice, shouting from the carriage.

The driver put his horses into a gallop, overtook them and pulled up.

"It's all up," said the other man; then both took to their heels and ran, disappearing through a gap in the hedge,

while the man in the carriage jumped out. The Pearl tore off the bandages and recognised the General Foreigner.

"Thank God," he said, "I am just in time. Merciful Providence, what an escape! Allow me to have the honour of escorting you home. Please to get into the carriage and I will mount the box."

"But the Baroness—" began the Pearl.

"Never mind, they will do nothing to her—make haste, make haste, there may be more men about, and then I should be overpowered. Get in, my dear young lady."

"He handed her in, mounted the box, and the carriage went off at the rate of ten miles an hour, but not homewards.

"What can all this mean?" thought the Pearl. "What am I saved from? What could they have done with me? But where are we going? This is not the road."

She put her head out of the window and said,

"You are going the wrong way. Please turn back, or let me out. Maplethorpe is the other side of the ford."

The General Foreigner stopped the carriage, got down, and came to the window hat in hand.

"Pardon me," he said, "I was afraid to go straight to Maplethorpe. I have reason to know that there is a plot, I have indeed; for I overheard something not intended for me—a plot to take you away; and what has happened this evening has showed me that I am right. You have had a great escape, believe me."

"A plot? by whom?" she said, "tell me, or I shall insist on getting out and walking home."

"Your cousin," he said, in a stage whisper. "He may be near us now. You can save yourself by flight only, till you shall have time to seek and obtain protection. You are not safe at Maplethorpe. The new servants do his bidding. I have been thinking, as I drove along, that it would be better to go to Backwater—to Lady Rossden's house, or better still, to the convent there. The nuns would receive you in the out-quarters of the convent."

"They don't know me," said the Pearl.

"They have heard of your good father, *who died a catholic*," said he, making an act of contrition to the devil for saying so in his extremity. "I know that they will. And from there you can telegraph to Lady Rossden. One of the nuns is my sister."

This was a lie of the first magnitude, but it served his purpose. The Pearl, bewildered by troubles that would have morally deranged, or physically broken down, any woman of lesser will, believed the story; while the scoundrel's meaning was to compromise her apparently, that so he might induce her to marry him.

"My sister," he said, "will take every care of you. I hope that you will allow me to have the honour of saving you from imminent danger. The lady you were walking with is *his* friend—you understand. You will not be safe to-night as long as you are near Maplethorpe. I *know* that."

"Are you telling me the truth?" said the Pearl. "Think before you answer, and be assured that, if you are not telling me the truth, I shall make you render an account for it. If you are trying to deceive me, go your way, and let me walk home."

"I swear by all that is most sacred," said the General Foreigner, backing reverentially towards the coach box, "that I have and can have only the wish to do you service. Why otherwise should I do it? What is it to me? You will thank me by and bye."

While saying the last word he again mounted the box, and the carriage drove away faster than before.

Meanwhile the Baroness had risen from the ground as soon as the carriage had started, and stood still for a minute or two gazing after it, until it disappeared in the darkening twilight.

"There you go," she muttered, "you contemptible scoundrel, cunning without forethought, clever without originality, studious without wisdom, fierce without courage! What have I done? given her into the power of such a man? Shall I stop them—shall I give the alarm? I have time—shall I? No, I cannot help it. I *must* go on. *He*, at Hunterscombe, would have it so. Yes, if I were to save her now they would find all out—and she would marry him. . . . Never, it shall not be. I have done this to revenge myself on him, and make use of the contemptible Twerleby. I must and will go on."

She turned to walk homewards, repeating to herself but in a muffled voice, "I cannot help it. That fiend entrapped me by his sophistries when, through the work of others, I was barely in the Church of God, but might have

been led back. He has been my evil genius ever since then, so that, when I had (or madly supposed myself to have) a last opportunity of turning to the love of God by means of a human love, and failed miserably in the attempt, I went back in despair to the hateful life that I am living. It is too late now to repent. God has abandoned me. I must go on."

When she reached home it was past ten o'clock, for she had purposely delayed on the road. Then she said to the butler in an agitated voice,

"Has Miss Malmaines come home? No? Then quick, send everyone to look, everyone that you can think of. I have lost her. Some rough men came behind us in the lane and one tried to take my watch. One must have struck me on the head and stunned me, for when I came to myself, I was lying on the grass, and she was gone. Look everywhere. It was at *this* end of the ford, I think, but my head is quite confused and aching so. Order the carriage to be ready if you cannot find her soon. I must go to London and tell Lady Rosdden. Go, look everywhere, send everyone."

Two hours afterwards the Baroness was on her way to London, and every available man was out, on foot and on horseback, searching the whole neighbourhood for the Pearl; but the Pearl, being further away, was not found.





CHAPTER LVIII.



THE chestnut mare, who never ceased pulling till she had left behind her about fifteen miles of the road, brought Monica to Hunterscombe in two hours.

Father Bramsby, Oswald and Mr. Blastmore had just finished a sort of evening meal after their late ride, when she jumped out of the dogcart, ran across the bridge, and pulled the bell violently.

"A sick call," said Father Bramsby: and the old butler hurried away from the dining-room to see what had happened. When he opened the great door Monica rushed in, and said,

"I must see Father Bramsby and the Squire at once, please. Where are they?"

"In the dining-room," said the butler. "But Mr. Blastmore is with them."

"Never mind that," said Monica, walking in. "I mustn't wait."

In another moment she was in the dining-room, curtsying and saying, "I beg your pardon, Father, but it's a matter of life and death."

Father Bramsby rose from his chair.

"What is it?" he said. "I hope that your—"

"No, Father," said she. "It's about my young lady—"

"What about her?" said Oswald, springing up and fixing his eyes on Monica, regardless of betraying himself.

"Suprême," she said, "overheard the Baroness this evening talking to a foreign man about carrying off someone. They didn't say who, nor could he find out where

from, but the Baroness was to take her to him somewhere at eight o'clock this evening. Suprême felt quite sure who it must be, and he hurried home,—it was in a lane somewhere near Grunley Green, so that without being seen himself he overheard their conversation in Italian—he ran all the way home to tell me not to let my young lady go out walking with the Baroness. But she had already gone out with her for an evening walk, and I knew not in what direction. Suprême heard the man say that he had got a carriage ready, to take her to this coast, that he had a boat waiting down at the little bay near Hunterscombe, where the young lady fell into the water, and that he was to get away on board some vessel off this coast. I'm sure it must be my young lady. The coachman drove me here straight away, and we never passed any carriage on the road. So they must be some way behind, because we came very fast."

"We must mount at once, and ride along the road that they will come by, to get to the bay," said Oswald leaving the room.

"You will stay here to-night," said Father Bramsby, "or have some supper at all events?"

"Thank you Father," said Monica. "I can't stay. The coachman can't wait many minutes, and I had better get home, in case she *might* come home all right and want me."

"You are right," said Father Bramsby. "And I think it would be as well not to talk about it—"

"Oh yes, Father," she said. "I won't of course, and Suprême wouldn't, and the coachman doesn't know why I came."

Mr. Blastmore, hearing the state of the case, followed Father Bramsby to the stables and ordered his horse.

"The carriage had better come after us, I think," said Father Bramsby, "and keep a little way off. This is a strange expedition for a Priest, but it can't be helped."

"We'll soon settle it," said Mr. Blastmore. "I'll fetch the driver off his perch with the butt-end of my hunting whip, if he shows any nonsense. I always ride with a good solid one."

In a few minutes they were in the saddle and riding away at a trot. They trotted on till they came to the place where Oswald had rescued Miss Warringford.

"This," said Oswald, "is the only place within four miles of the turning, where a boat can put off."

"I see a boat," said Mr. Blastmore, "and a chap in it, paddling about. Just catch hold of my horse while I have a look."

He jumped off, and going to the water's edge, within a few feet of the boat, said in a loud voice, "Who the devil are you?"

When he had said this, he made an act of contrition for so expressing himself, and said louder than before: "what are you doing here, you blackguard? Be off, or I'll see about you."

"You go to the devil," said the man in the boat with a strong foreign accent: and thereupon he turned away to light his pipe. Whereupon Mr. Blastmore threw a big pebble at him vigorously. The big pebble struck him in such a way between his shoulders that he pulled hard off shore, swearing in some sort of language not understood of Mr. Blastmore, who gruffly laughed and, going back, mounted his horse.

"I thought so," said he. "That vagabond is one of them. He tried to face me out because he was afloat. But I hit him plump with a stone that I picked up; and he made off, chattering to himself and jumping about. But when will the other blackguard give us a chance?"

"Before long, I hope," said Oswald. "We had better ride on to the turning and look along the other road."

On they went at a foot's pace, not speaking but listening. Soon after they had turned into the other road, a dogcart passed them at the rate of twelve miles an hour.

"Monica going back," said Father Bramsby. "Will they pass the carriage?—no, I see they are turning up the short way by the cross roads." And then nothing more was said, though they rode up and down till the church clock of Dripstone Shelford had struck eleven. Not a sound had they heard, except the church clock and the clatter of their horse's hoofs on the road's hardened surface. The air was quite still and sultry.

Another half hour passed, and another quarter, or perhaps more, and the moon had risen. They were in the Backwater Road again turning back, when Oswald pulled up, and said,

"I hear wheels. Thank God for the moon. We must keep out of sight, round there, behind that bank and hedge."

There they placed themselves, and there they waited more than five minutes, when Oswald suddenly rode forward, turned the corner, saw in the moonlight the General Foreigner on the box of a carriage, and set spurs to his horse, followed closely by Mr. Blastmore.

"Drive on," bawled the General Foreigner; but Oswald kept the horses back by sharply tapping their noses with the handle of his hunting whip, while Mr. Blastmore laid the double thong of his across the driver's knuckles with instant effect, saying, "If you dare to move, I'll break your head open."

The General Foreigner jumped off the box and succeeded in getting inside the carriage, while Oswald and Mr. Blastmore were dismounting and giving Father Bramsby their horses to hold.

"Thieves! how dare you stop me? I am armed—" shouted the General Foreigner from the window, and immediately a bullet from a revolver whizzed by Oswald's head as he rushed at the carriage door. The butt end of Mr. Blastmore's hunting whip brought the revolver to the ground, but the General Foreigner picked it up while Oswald was opening the door. Oswald had just time enough to drag him out of the carriage, close with him, wrench the revolver out of his hand and throw it over the bank, but not time enough to secure himself against a dagger concealed. Instead of pinioning the General Foreigner's arms, he incautiously collared him. The result was that he received a stab in the arm, and would have had another in some vital place, if Mr. Blastmore had not again intervened with his hunting whip, struck the dagger out of his hand, and then seizing the General Foreigner with his left hand, shaken him to and fro, as a terrier would a rat.

"You're hurt," he said to Oswald.

"Only a scratch," said Oswald.

"I don't know that it is only a scratch," said Mr. Blastmore, still holding the General Foreigner in his powerful grip, and shaking him again. "You are bleeding profusely. Let Father Bramsby tie it up."

"Never mind that," said Oswald, thinking of the Pearl only. She was lying back in a corner of the carriage, her

eyes closed, either strangely sleeping or stupified, and could not be roused.

"She must have been given a sleeping draught," said Father Bramsby. "But here comes the carriage."

At this moment the yellow chariot drove up with the groom on the box grasping a big stick. While Oswald was lifting the Pearl out of the fly, Mr. Blastmore dragged the General Foreigner behind it, and there held him at arms length.

"Coward, beast, Birmingham rough, London black-guard," said the General Foreigner, struggling to free himself. "Fight with swords and pistols. *Je suis prêt, quand vous voudrez.*"

"D—n your gibberish (God forgive me!)" said Mr. Blastmore. "The plain English of it is that I mean to pay you off, as far as the Pope would allow, for trying to shoot my best friend and all the rest of it."

Saying this, he turned the General Foreigner head downwards, doubled up the lash of his hunting whip and applied the double thong in such a sort that the sound thereof might almost have been heard at Dripstone Shelford. The General Foreigner, being supported by Mr. Blastmore's left hand, which held him as in a vice, leaped into the air, kicking about and swearing in various languages. But owing to the law of gravitation, he had to come down; and then the double thong came down again and again, with such a succession of whacks that it awaked the echoes.

Meanwhile Oswald had carried the Pearl to the yellow chariot and placed her inside. Father Bramsby, after binding Oswald's arm as well as he could, then got in, and ordered the coachman to drive home, leaving directions with the groom to ride his cob and ask the doctor to come as quickly as possible. When they had started, Oswald returned to Mr. Blastmore, who continued to apply the double thong with unabated vigour, while the polyglot swearing became a continuous yell, until Oswald said, "We had better be going, I think, for fear of anyone coming. This affair must *not* be known for *her* sake."

Mr. Blastmore gave a final whack and let go. The General Foreigner spun round and round three times, like a dog with a flea in his coat, and crept away to the hired carriage. Oswald followed and said to the driver,

"A word with *you*. Do you know what you are liable to for your share in this?"

"I was reg'lar took in, Squire," said the man.

"Well, then," said Oswald, "I will let you off. I shall be able to do so, if you keep quiet. But if ever you say a word about it to anyone, to *anyone*, mind, you will be had up as an accomplice, and we shall have to give evidence against you."

"All right, Squire, trust me," said the man.

"That's it," said Mr. Blastmore. "Mind you keep as mum as a mouse, for if it ever got wind you'd get penal servitude for life."

"Drive to the shore," said the General Foreigner beginning to get in.

"What? and have you skipping off in a boat without paying?" said the driver.

"I shall pay you there," said the General Foreigner crouching down inside.

"That won't do," said the driver getting off his box.

"You'll stump up," said Mr. Blastmore, "or I'll see about you."

The General Foreigner, knowing what that meant, paid for the hire of the carriage and gave sixpence to the driver, who said, "I'm glad you've been and caught it," and mounting the box, drove away, touching his hat as he passed Oswald.

"This bit of a rag you've got, won't do," said Mr. Blastmore, taking an enormous handkerchief out of his pocket, and binding it round Oswald's arm. "You're more hurt than you think. You look very white about the gills, you do. You're not fit to ride home. You ought to have gone in the carriage."

"I am only a little faint," said Oswald, "faint from pain. The knife or whatever it was must have pierced a muscle."

"I've got it," said Mr. Blastmore, picking up the dagger and putting it into his pocket. "You must keep this. But I don't like your looking so white."

"Give me a leg up," said Oswald. "I shall do very well."

They rode away slowly and met the hired carriage returning empty. The boat was waiting, and the General Foreigner was conveyed on board the small vessel intended to compromise the Pearl. He appeared in a very diminished plight. His tight garments were in shreds, and

his whole deportment indicated an absorbing wish to get out of himself. The Baroness Diabolouski had tried in many ways to keep him out of Ilsetshire ; but Mr. Blastmore had caused him to have a spontaneous intention of keeping out.

"This is done by the Baroness Diabolouski," he muttered to himself. "She has betrayed me. She *must*. For not another human being but herself knew anything about it."

How he explained the case when he went on board without the expected lady, and with evident marks of the treatment that he had received, is not known.

Father Bramsby had sent the groom on his cob for the doctor, not only on account of Oswald's wound, but also because the Pearl, having slept through the fight, and the pistol shot, and the resounding whacks of Mr. Blastmore's double thong, and the howling of the General Foreigner, caused him great anxiety. She slept still as they drove home in the carriage and after they had reached home, and after she had been carried upstairs into the quaint old bedroom panelled with dark oak.

The doctor was not at home : but he might be expected, it was said, within four or five hours. During that uncertain interval the Pearl awoke, and Father Bramsby, being called, came to see her.

"Where am I?" she said. "But I know *you*, don't I? Yes, of course I do."

"Yes, you do," said Father Bramsby, "and I knew your dear father very well. You have had an accident, and want a little rest."

"No," she said, rousing herself and sitting up on the sofa where she had been laid. "I know that I have been given something to make me sleep. That man who rescued me, or pretended to rescue me from some plot, which no doubt he was helping to carry out himself, stopped at some kind of inn, when we had driven about an hour on the road (as he said) to the convent at Backwater, and brought me a cup of tea. I was tired and dreadfully thirsty and I believed he was really doing what he pretended—I don't know how, because I feel so confused—but I drank it, and then I felt very sleepy and remember nothing more. I don't know what happened afterwards, nor how I came here, nor where I am—yes, but I do know that. This is the beautiful old room that I admired so much when you

showed my dear father and myself over this house last year. We were riding and lost our way—you remember?

"Yes, I do," said Father Bramsby.

"And you have saved me from that man, I see," said the Pearl. "But how did you know?"

"Monica found out by means of *Suprême* that the Baroness and this man had plotted to carry you this evening on board a boat, and then to some vessel from the little bay near here. She was not in time to stop you from going out walking with the Baroness; so she drove here last night, between eight and nine o'clock, to give us warning. By this means we were just in time. Be sure that here you are cared for as if you were at home. Your father would be sure of that. You will soon be well and able to go home."

"And you have saved me," she said. "How can I ever thank you! But till the 15th of September, when I shall be of age, I cannot go home; meanwhile you must not tell anyone where I am, for my guardians would come and take me away. And therefore I must entreat of you to find some place of refuge for me—a cottage would be the best, where I can remain unknown."

"Is that requisite?" said he. "Such a step is to be avoided if possible. I could not advise it, unless it were to prevent some evidently worse evil."

"I think," she said, "that you *will* advise it when you have heard all. But I feel so stupid just now, with a sort of headache, perhaps I had better tell it all to you to-morrow morning."

"Much better," said he. "You require rest and natural sleep. Good-night, and God bless you."

"And you won't let the doctor come—I shall be all right to-morrow—nor let anyone know who I am?"

Father Bramsby promised; then left the room and went downstairs to wait for the doctor.

He was an old friend of the family. Father Bramsby, suppressing names, gave him an outline of the adventure, as far as it was necessary, to account for Oswald's wound, but begged that no mention of it might transpire. The doctor of course promised entire secrecy. He found Oswald very feverish, and ordered him to remain in bed for several days, saying that his wound, though not actually dangerous, might, without care, be very troublesome.



CHAPTER LIX.



HE Pearl breakfasted in her own room, and then went down to the drawing-room at Hunterscombe. Then she sent for Father Bramsby, and described to him in detail her evening walk, how it was lengthened by the Baroness, and what occurred at the ford. She told him how Twerleby had proposed on the strength of a sealed codicil, and how the codicil had really or supposititiously disappeared when she insisted on reading it. She told him how Lady Rosسدan had made use of all kinds of pressure to induce her to believe Twerleby's version of the case and consent to marry him, but had scarcely finished her story when Monica was announced, who at once plunged *in medias res*.

"If you please Father," she said, "it won't do for my young lady to go back home yet. There's no knowing what the Baroness might be up to."

"As things are," said Father Bramsby, "I dare not advise her to return at present."

"How can I draw a cheque on the banker," said she, "without being discovered?"

"I will be your banker," said Father Bramsby, "and find some quiet place where you and Monica can be. I am afraid that you would not be long undiscoverable here. I know of a nice widow woman at Old Sleetham, where I think you would be comfortable. She lets lodgings in the summer and might have her rooms vacant now."

"Old Sleetham?" said Monica. "Is it Mrs. Winifred Cox? I've heard tell of her through a lady who came to my mother's through Mrs. Cox being full."

"Yes, that's the very person," said Father Bramsby,

"Hadn't I better walk there now? It's barely three miles over the downs—though every inch of six by the road—and make sure of it? I brought plenty of my young lady's things with me and locked the wardrobes after. *Suprême* helped me to take down the boxes before it was light this morning. He got me the cart too, to bring them, and I've left them at the stables here, they're directed to you. No one knows but what they're things ordered by you or the Squire to be sent here."

"You are a good thoughtful girl, and always were," said Father Bramsby; "yes, you had better do as you propose. I will take care that the luggage is sent on."

"I should like to go too," said the Pearl. "A walk over the downs would do me good. I shall stay there if the rooms are vacant. And now I must have some name."

"Mrs. Brown, or better still, Mrs. Lloyd Jones," said Father Bramsby.

"Yes—of Pantasaph," said the Pearl, "come to Ilsetshire for change of air; and Monica is—let me see—Mary Thomas—that will do. And Mary you must remember to say Mrs. Jones when you speak to me; we had better practise on the way."

This being settled, the Pearl, accompanied by the faithful Monica, set out on foot for Old Sleetham, saying to Father Bramsby, "I can never be grateful enough to you for all that you have done."

"My dear child," said he, "I did nothing. Good-bye. God bless you."

"Who did?" thought the Pearl. "For certainly I have been saved from some sort of danger."

And then she thought that certainly Oswald had nothing to do with the rescue, nor would have had anything, nor ever would have anything to do with it even remotely nor indirectly afterwards, and being at home, had remained carefully out of sight—of course he had. How could he do otherwise, when he had compelled her to cut him by being such a dreadful and almost incredible deceiver?

These thoughts passed through her mind in an instant, and then a question occurred that made her turn back on the bridge before Father Bramsby had gone in.

"Did my father," she said, "become a Catholic?"

"He did," said Father Bramsby, "I received him into the Church."

"Was he well at the time?"

"Perfectly well."

"Did he die a Catholic?"

"Yes. I gave him the last rites, and I was with him when he died."

"Thank you again for all your kindness to me," said the Pearl, turning away.

"Wait one moment," said Father Bramsby. "Did you not receive a letter from him when you were in Rome,—a letter in which he gave you the why and the wherefore of that?"

"No," she said, "I was expecting one—when—when I heard of his death. Are you *sure* that he did write?"

"Yes. He spoke of it to me, and I saw the letter directed to you, lying on his bed."

"Did you post it?"

"No. He did not give it to me. He gave it to Mr. Twerleby."

The Pearl hurried away and walked on with Monica towards Old Sleetham.

"I had better," she thought, "have not asked the question. The letter is lost or destroyed, and if I had it, it would be too late. I cannot believe now."

Which meant that if Oswald could be false, there was no truth in anything. And had she not seen those lines, those dreadful lines in his own handwriting?

* * * * *

Before they had left the wood, Monica taking from her pocket a flaxen wig and a pair of blue spectacles, proceeded to put them on.

"What are you going to do?" said the Pearl, rousing herself to seem cheerful.

"It's all right Ma'am," said Monica. "There's no telling what some of them will be at, and it wouldn't do to let them know at Old Sleetham who we are."

"You dear good Monica—Mary I mean," said the Pearl sadly, "you are always right. I have much,—very much, to learn from you—more than I am able to learn. Do as you think best."

"You could teach me, Ma'am, a great deal more than I know," said Monica, "if you would only let yourself have the Faith. You want that,—excuse me for saying so—and you know that you do want it and might have it."

"Do you really think so?" said the Pearl.

Monica gave no answer, judging wisely that what she had said had better be left as it was : but when they had gone some distance further, she advised the Pearl to put her veil down and to remember, after arriving at Old Sleetham that she was Mrs. Lloyd Jones.





CHAPTER LX.



THE Baroness Diabolouski, travelling by the night express, reached London at five o'clock that morning, but instead of remaining there and breaking the news to Lady Rossden, she hurried off through London by the South Eastern line to Folkstone. Leaving her small amount of luggage in the cloak-room, she went to the telegraph office, and sent a telegram to Lady Rossden in London. Then she ordered a cup of coffee and a roll at the station, ate and drank the same with much dislike, because both were bad, and returned to London by the next up train.

Lady Rossden and Augustus Twerleby had only just finished breakfast when the telegram was brought in. Lady Rossden opened it, and screamed or rather squalled, stamping her feet and wringing her hands.

"What *is* the matter?" said Twerleby.

"Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh!" said she. "I can't speak of it. See for yourself. Oh! It *is* too, too, too—"

She pushed it into his hand and setting up a piteous howl, ran about the room tearing her hair, which not being her own, came off as a whole. The telegram was as follows:

M. M. to Lady Rossden.

Before you receive this I shall be out of England and married. You would have opposed my marriage to a foreigner. Will write soon.

"Get a detective," said Lady Rossden hastily replacing her hair. "Send half a dozen detectives after them. Go at once."

"What's the use of that?" said Twerleby. "She doesn't say whether she is off to Spain, France or America; and she promises to write—perhaps she will to-morrow. Wait till we hear. As to catching them up, in these days it is impossible. They would be in France before the detective, and off again, no one knows where. All that you can do now is to keep the thing quiet: and there is only one way of doing that. You must go abroad—"

"I go abroad? What for?"

"To make it seem as if she had gone with you. Remember the scandal of the thing, and you her guardian—you must make it seem as if she had been married with your consent, and in your presence."

"No, I won't have it said or supposed that I ever *could* have consented to her marrying no one knows who—and a foreigner, against her poor father's wish—"

Then you must get the Baroness Diabolouski to go for you, and so prevent the scandal. She would do it, I am sure, if you asked her. You had better telegraph to her, and ask her to come here without delay."

"I *might* do that," said Lady RosSDen, settling her hair. "Yes, you had better telegraph at once. But who can *he* be? How dreadfully sly of her. Where and how *can* she have met him?"

"I can't imagine," said Twerleby, sitting down to write the telegraphic message. "Will this do? 'Most important business come at once.' But I must go to Maplethorpe and make it be supposed by degrees that the Baroness Diabolouski was present at the marriage, as you won't. You may trust her to find a satisfactory explanation of that."

"But would it be quite what one would like to do?" said Lady RosSDen. "It sounds like telling lies."

"Not at all," said he. "I should only speak of both going abroad, and then of the marriage. If people choose to infer the rest, I can't help it."

Lady RosSDen, whose mind had been always more or less in a muddle, knew not how to answer this transparent sophistry, and therefore said, "Very well." Twerleby went out; sent the telegraphic message to the Baroness Diabolouski at Maplethorpe, where she was not; came back, packed up, and returned to the drawing-room, intending to go to Ilsetshire by the twelve o'clock train.

He, having chosen the hour of his departure from London, so as to arrive there after the Baroness Diabolouski should have left it in obedience to the telegram, appeared before his affectionate aunt, only in time to say goodbye ; while a cab, heavily laden with his luggage, was waiting at the door.

"Well, my dear," said Lady Rossden. "This is a dreadful affair. I shall never get over it. But no doubt you are right about going home. You will see to everything, and find out things, and stop the thing in the way that you proposed. You are so clever that you can do it without doing anything wrong. But do you think that she will undertake to go, and have it supposed that she had connived at it?"

"She must," said Twerleby, "if you put the case plainly before her. "She was responsible for Margaret—and you must hold her responsible for what has happened. You must promise to let her off on condition of her going, and on no other."

"I see," said Lady Rossden. "She *shall* go, *that* she shall."

"Then good-bye for the present," said he.

"Good-bye,—but wait a minute. I have some more things to say."

"I can't. I should be late for the train."

"Never mind," said she, putting her hand on his arm.

"You can go later."

"No, I can't," said he, retreating to the door. "I ought to be there sooner."

"Yes, but I just wanted to say—"

"No. I can't stop—"

But he had to stop ; for the door was then opened in such a wise that it sent him staggering against Lady Rossden, who, before she had recovered her balance, found herself in the arms of the Baroness Diabolouski, weeping and sobbing ; who had just returned from Folkestone, instead of being at Maplethorpe in receipt of the summoning telegram. Twerleby, profiting by this, began to walk away in a light and noiseless manner ; but the Baroness, bounding past him, placed herself against the door.

"Both of you must hear it," she said, "for both of you are her guardians."

"I have heard it," said Twerleby, trying to edge himself

in between her and the door. "I can't wait just now."

"You can go quite as well by a later train," said Lady Rossden. "You ought to be here and talk things over with us. You really must."

Twerleby, knowing the Baroness, and not knowing what the consequences of disobedience might be, forced himself to say, "Very well, I will go later." Immediately the Baroness threw herself into Lady Rossden's arms, weeping and moaning in so piteous a fashion that any well-behaved stone would have melted on the carpet.

"I can hardly speak of it," she said; "and yet I must."

"We know it," said Lady Rossden, moved by the tears and moans, but struggling against the embrace.

"Do you? But how—when I alone was there, and came away at once to break the dreadful news? I should have been here hours ago, but I was taken ill, owing to the shock. They carried me out at some small station, and I came on as soon as I was able. How can you know what I have not yet told you?"

"By a telegram," said Lady Rossden, bringing out of her pocket the well known yellow paper for telegrams made and provided. "Here it is."

The Baroness read, started and screamed. Lady Rossden replaced the yellow paper in her pocket, and said in a warning voice:

"You must go after them."

"There is nothing else to be done," said Twerleby, feeling himself supported.

This view of the case was quite unforeseen and altogether embarrassing, but the Baroness was equal to the occasion.

"I will go at once, if you wish it," she said, "or do anything else for you that I possibly can. But I don't see what I could do. I don't know where to go, nor have I any authority over her."

"I shall be able to let you know where they are," said Lady Rossden. "She is going to write to me. The thing is, you see, that if you are known to have gone abroad and fall in with them somewhere, and people are told that you *were* with them about that time, it would make the thing seem (don't you see?) to have been allowed—"

"And so prevent a scandal," added Twerleby, "which is all that can be done now."

"Yes, it is, I fear," said the Baroness, "but Lady Rossden is the only person who could do it effectually. She is in the position of a mother."

"But you," said Lady Rossden, "were with her when she went off, and people will say that it looks very odd."

This remark might be classed among the things that one would rather have left unsaid, because it furnished the Baroness with an unanswerable reply.

"Yes, no doubt they will," said she, "though Margaret led me round into the road where the carriage met us, and I was made senseless by a blow on my head from which I am now suffering great pain. Of course I shall be misjudged—accused of being an accomplice. But for that very reason my going would defeat the purpose intended. You *must* see that I am the very *last* person to go."

Lady Rossden was dumb-founded, and began to cry. The Baroness followed up her advantage.

"The very one," she said, "of all the people in the world, who ought not to go. You, on the contrary, are *the* one to go. You are in the place of a mother, and therefore your presence would lead every one to infer that you had approved of the marriage."

"What?—me?—approve of her marrying an adventurer?"

"How do you know that he is an adventurer?"

"Why, of course he is. No decent man would act like that."

"Be it so. But at least you must now make the best of it by countenancing them. You said just now that it is the only thing to be done."

"I am surprised at you, when you oughtn't to have walked with her at all outside the park so late, with nobody about. Really it was, you know—and everyone will say—"

"They will, of course, because I, as a faithful friend, will not exculpate myself. I only advise you for your own sake and hers. Now just consider how you stand with regard to this miserable business."

"Not at all, *you* have to consider how *you* stand. Who is he? Where did she see him?"

"I know nothing about that, I can only assure you, (and you may ask the servants if it is not so,) that no one has stayed at Maplethorpe since you went away, so it must be some one she knew last winter, probably met him at

some ball. My dear friend, sorrow has driven you out of your wits for a moment. For your sake, I *must* speak plainly, painful as it is to do so. More is known than you are aware of about the doings at Maplethorpe latterly. For instance, the affair of the codicil has got about."

This was invented on the spot without any foundation whatever; but it served well to frighten Lady Rossden and secure the silence of Twerleby.

"Why can't somebody find it?" said Lady Rossden. "It really is enough to drive one wild."

"Unless you do as I have advised," said the Baroness, "the marriage will be known to be clandestine, and then Margaret's loss of Maplethorpe by marrying a foreigner will be attributed to the loss of that codicil, in which the proviso will be supposed, of course, to have been revoked. It will be confirmed in the estimation of every one by your treatment of Margaret after her refusal to act on the alleged words of the codicil; and you or your nephew will be credited with having destroyed it in order to deprive her of the estate. Your behaviour to her, I am sorry to say, was observed by all the servants and repeated, and is known all over the neighbourhood—indeed Margaret herself was heard to say, more than once, that you would drive her away—and this, most certainly, will be understood to mean that you have been the chief mover in an abominable plot to cheat Margaret out of Maplethorpe by contriving a scheme to betray her. I shall be powerless to help you out of it, because, as you justly remarked, I shall be looked upon as your accomplice. I would, as you well know, do anything in the world to save you; and I could save you, if you would let me. But you are making it absolutely impossible. Your absence from her at this critical time will show that her marriage is clandestine, make everyone feel that you drove her to it, and silence me by making it seem that I helped her to elope. I have given you the only sound advice that can be given, and you will *not* take it. I can do no more except relieve you of my presence, which now would only strengthen the impression against you, by making everyone infer that you had persuaded me to bring about the elopement. I must leave England at once, because you are making it impossible for me to exculpate myself."

She turned away resolutely, as if going, though in fact, nothing could be further from her intentions. Twerleby stood still and hoped, Lady Rosssden ran after her and cried. The Baroness opened the door and walked out.

"Oh! don't," said Lady Rosssden, clinging to her physically and morally, "don't leave me,"

The Baroness came again into the room, shut the door quietly, took her by the hand with a firm but nervous grasp, and led her back to the place where they had been standing.

"Hush, my poor unhappy friend," she said. "I hope that you are not overheard. I leave you because, for evident reasons, I have no choice. Were I to remain with you I should put myself in a false position, and make yours worse than it is."

"I *will* do as you wish, I will indeed," said Lady Rosssden. "But couldn't you go with me?"

"If I were to do that," answered the Baroness, "how could I be at Maplethorpe, exculpating you?"

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear! How dreadful it all is! When am I to go?"

"Now—so that visitors may be told that you have gone abroad. It is all important that your going abroad should be heard of as a thing of the past."

"But where am I to go? Really it is too bad to be packed off in this way, and have to go about after them, looking as if I had no business to be anywhere, and ashamed of it all, and not knowing what to do next, and perhaps coming back like a fool—"

"As you are"—thought the Baroness. "But you must go somewhere out of this country, whatever you may look like."

"Just as if I had been helping them to get away," said Lady Rosssden, "and come home afterwards to pretend that I hadn't."

"Not a bit of it," said the Baroness, in a comforting tone. "You forget that she will write to you to-morrow and that her letter will be forwarded by the next post. In fact, if you will authorize it, the letter might be opened by one of us, and the address in it telegraphed to you. Wait one moment and I will shew you exactly what to do."

"You seem to know everything," said Lady Rosssden.

"I am sure I don't know the least in the world what to do about it."

"Here," said the Baroness, who had sat down at the writing table, and written on a sheet of paper, "Go to Paris—to this hotel, which is a good one,—you will not see any one there that you know. We shall forward the letter to you there, and if you like telegraph the address, so that you will know where to find them."

Twerleby shuddered at the sound of the pronoun "we," and said, "She has not told us whether she will send the letter here or to Maplethorpe, and therefore considering the enormous importance of forwarding the letter and address without delay, one of us must be here, and the other at Maplethorpe, till it has been forwarded."

"Yes, as an extra precaution," said the Baroness, "though she is quite sure to send it here, where she sent the telegram, and where she supposes you both to be. Then we have settled everything, except the getting ready. There is plenty of time to do that before luncheon, and plenty of time after luncheon to get away before anyone calls. I will see to the rest, and, at any rate, make it right for *you*. But you may hope for more than that, owing to your promptitude. People can't be married without giving notice, and therefore you will in all probability, find them in time to stop the marriage. You will then be able to come home with her, just as if she had gone abroad with you. Leave me to manage that. In the meanwhile I had better get you a French lady's maid that I have known for some years, and who is now disengaged. You can leave her behind in France, and send for your own to come home with you. If you manage well, no one will know anything about it. Leave it all to me. The whole thing will be more than forgotten. It will be as if it had never been."

Comforted by this view of the case, Lady Rossden went into her bedroom, rang the bell and selected dresses to be packed, while the Baroness Diabolouski selected a French lady's maid for temporary service.

The latter selection was made vicariously by means of a note: but after the note had been sent, she said to Twerleby, "They would pay more attention to it if you were to go yourself."

"Well—it you wish it," said Twerleby, looking as if he had rather not go.

But he assured himself privately when leaving the house that he would not come back. He would go to Maplethorpe to collect and pack necessities, follow Lady Rossden to Paris, accuse the Baroness most circumstantially of being the chief conspirator in the plot, and cause her to be exploded from Ilsetshire.

This was a very comforting conclusion to the troubles that he had brought upon himself by rejecting the grace of God: but it fell out that before he had walked a hundred yards from the door, rejoicing in the prospect of relief, the Baroness Diabolouski glided up to him from behind and said:

"After all, I thought I had better come and see about it."

"There is no doubt about that," said Twerleby, facing about.

"Come with me," said the Baroness, "I have something to say."

Twerleby made a long stride pretending not to hear: but she ran after him in a playful manner, not attractive of notice from passers-by, and putting her hand on his arm, gripped it firmly.

"You must *not* turn back," she said. "No. You really must not. Your time for decision is short; and the consequences, one way or the other, will be life-long. You depend absolutely on me. I am the only one in the whole world who can and will save you from the ruinous consequences of your own actions. Come with me, and listen."

Twerleby did so, knowing that if he did not, worse would happen to him: but he again told himself that he would pack up, go abroad with Lady Rossden, and explode the Baroness.

"That," he thought, "will be much better than going to Maplethorpe first. As to the letter, I can't help that. It must take its chance. My aunt is not fit to go alone. I must and will insist on going with her."

"I am the only one," repeated the Baroness. "We have done this together, and we—"

"Done *what* together?" said Twerleby, perceiving that he must resist now, or finally submit.

"Don't you remember," said the Baroness, "our conclusions about the fascinating foreigner?"

"I remember what you proposed," said he.

"And I," said she, "remember how you caught at it."

"I didn't catch at it—"

"Oh! you mustn't say that. I remember your words perfectly. Shall I repeat them?"

"What would be the use of that? I have no witness."

"So much the better for *you*. The fact is that you *did* catch at it, and made your aunt go with you to London for the purpose of giving the opportunity."

"I didn't make her go—"

"Hush! not so loud. She told me that you did, and I heard you—not once, but several times, urging her to go."

"If I did want her to go, it doesn't follow—"

"It does follow that you did it for the purpose agreed upon between us."

"I never agreed to what was done, nor did you propose it to me."

"Nonsense. You know as well as I did that such a marriage must be clandestine—which means running away."

"No, I didn't. I didn't think of it."

"You may have the benefit of that. But should you like it to be known that you conspired against your Uncle's only child, for the purpose of getting her property, when he had entrusted her to your charge in the responsible position of a guardian?"

This was unanswerable. The wretched man, who had aped the fallen angels without their natural powers, could only mumble out a lie.

"You know," he said, "that I didn't mean it."

"I know that you *did*," said the Baroness, "and everyone will know that you must have meant it, because you had already tried to get the property by marrying her, and laid a trap to catch her through her affection for her father, by pretending that he wished her to marry you."

"By what right," said Twerleby, "do you assume that he did not wish it?"

"Firstly," said she, "by the fact that he never said so to her nor to anyone else; and secondly, by your not showing her the codicil in which you asserted it to be written."

"I regret now," said Twerleby, "that I didn't break my promise and let her open it. If I had it now, I would. But do you happen to know who your friend, the fascinating foreigner is?"

"He is a friend of yours after a fashion," said she, "and not quite unknown in Ilsetshire."

"What? not that ugly, vulgar, spiteful brute?—you *can't* mean *him*?" said Twerleby, trembling all over and reddening with rage.

"Yes, it is," answered the Baroness. "I didn't make him."

"But I never supposed," he said, "never could have believed that you would have had anything to do with such a marriage as that."

"Who else would have done what you wanted?" said she. "Anyone in society capable of doing it would have been aware of the conditions of her father's will. No one would have undertaken it except himself,—a man in whose detestable character meanness and savagery are one. You wanted me to get Maplethorpe for you, and I had no other way than to connive—"

"But how could she tolerate him?" interrupted Twerleby.

"You have read her telegram," said the Baroness, "and therefore your question is foolish."

"I can't believe—where did she see him?"

"He has been devoted to her for a long time," said the Baroness, "and I suppose they contrived some way of meeting or writing. I saw her talking to him one day in the avenue, and heard her invite him into the house. She took me to the ford in time to meet him there, and got into the carriage. I was half fainting, but I saw her do so of her own accord. Do you suppose that such a man as he is would let her telegraph and promise to write, without being sure of her somehow? No doubt he would have a small vessel waiting for them somewhere along the coast—near Folkestone, I daresay. The fact is, it is not complimentary, but I *must* say it—she would have married anyone to get rid of *you*: and even more so, to get away from the steady silent pressure of Lady Rosssden's manner and black looks. You must have seen how it tried the poor girl, and you *wouldn't* do anything to stop it. It was enough to drive a girl mad—quite enough—under all the

circumstances. You know it was. After all, she may make something of him."

"She *couldn't* like such a beast," interrupted Twerleby.

"You mustn't," said the Baroness, "be so virtuously indignant after what was done in Paris, or rather attempted. If you don't know who it was, I can tell you. Be wise, and accept the position that you have made for yourself, as I have accepted mine. We know what we were, and what we are, and what we have done together. We cannot be separated now. There is only one way of saving you. Otherwise our respective positions in relation to recent events would be antagonistic, and I should be compelled, however reluctantly, to defend myself—which would be fatal to you, as you know."

Twerleby knew it too well, and saw that he was in the last extremity: but the alternative was such, that he remained speechless.

"Can't you speak?" she said, "and save me from the intolerable necessity of speaking it? Don't you know what that must be to a woman? Can't you speak like a man, when you know that it *must* be spoken?"

"One can't do everything at once," he stammered out. "One requires a little time."

"The time for considering is past," said she, standing still. "I must save you from yourself, or you are lost. *Here is the place.*"

"What place?" he exclaimed, feeling as if he had been iced though the day was hot.

"Hush!—not so loud, or you will be heard," said she. "This is the registrar's office."

His legs began to move hurriedly away by an automatic process; but she quietly seized his arm and said, "*You must go in with me.*"

"What am I to go in there for?" said he.

"To be married, what else?" said she, "since you *will* be so terribly unchivalrous as to force the words out of me."

"No—no, it isn't that—of course I should be delight—" said Twerleby, struggling to get away without being observed. "It isn't that. But, you know, those things require due notice."

"Yes—twenty-one days," said she. "You have been longer than that in London. I gave due notice three

weeks ago. I have thought of it all, and all is ready."

"But *I* am not ready," said he. "Don't you see that till I find the codicil—and I mean to set detectives on it at once—we can't, we really can't. Everyone would say that it revoked the clause against marrying a foreigner, and that we destroyed it to get Maplethorpe."

"I have thought of everything," said she, "and provided for everything. Come in."

"I can't," said he; "a registrar's office really is such a low way of—"

"The religious part of it," she said, "will be done more advantageously in France, before we go to Maplethorpe. But you *must* see that without this, to make it legal here, we couldn't go to France together."

"Whatever you have provided for," said Twerleby, struggling to free himself without being observed, "you can't make it right for either of us, till I have recovered the codicil."

"Is that all?" said she.

"Yes: but it must be done," said he.

"Are you quite sure that it *is* all?" said she, looking doubtful, as if she had suddenly foreseen some impediment.

"Quite sure," said he, assuring himself that he would be off to Norway, without giving her another chance.

"Then," said she, "we have settled everything. I HAVE THE CODICIL."

These words broke him down. Twerleby, conquered and helpless, went in.

When he came out, he was the husband by law of the Baroness Diabolouski; but the event was not to be known by Lady Rossden till they had in fact or fable been married as Christians.

After luncheon Lady Rossden started on her travels in search of the Pearl, and he followed with his terrible wife later in the day, gnawed by unrepentant remorse for having consented to the plot, despising himself, hating her, miserable without hope of relief. All three, in different ways, believed the abduction to be an accomplished fact: yet, as we know, the Pearl, under the loving care of Monica, was all the while in safe retirement at Old Sleetham.



CHAPTER LXI.



OLD Sleetham, once a small fishing town, had been improved into a decayed village by modern progress. Exclusive of children it numbered about thirty-five inhabitants, all of whom, except three, lived by working elsewhere. These three exceptions were, firstly, a man who kept a general shop and made or mended boots ; secondly, his wife, who did a little sewing behind the counter, in readiness to sell tea, tobacco or tallow candles ; thirdly, the Catholic widow of a Catholic market gardener, who, by his market gardening close to Osmundsbury, had saved enough to leave her a thousand pounds invested in a mortgage. This widow's house was the place that Father Bramsby had chosen for the Pearl ; and there the Pearl was, as Mrs. Lloyd Jones, while Lady Rosdden was wondering why she had not yet written from somewhere abroad.

Her life there was in itself dull, and under any other circumstances would have been wearisome ; for her walks were necessarily limited, and she had only one book that Monica had hurriedly thrown in, finding it on the dressing-table at Maplethorpe. But weary she was not, because her mind was occupied. Weariness is not where occupation is, however painful the occupation may be. The one book was of the sort that may be called Sentimental Philosophizing, or Lies made easy : one of several brought to Maplethorpe by the Baroness Diabolouski.

Thus the time passed on, day by day ; the Pearl thinking without a conclusion, sorrowing without comfort and walking without any change of scene, while Monica watched

from morning till night, disguised by the spectacles and flaxen wig, and a heavy manner cleverly assumed; so that she was not recognized by the widow, who had not seen her since she was a child. On Sunday mornings she walked over the downs by a short cut, and heard the seven o'clock Mass at the convent at Backwater; hurrying back afterwards, to be at home while the widow went to the later Mass at Hunterscombe. And this was the only time she ever left the Pearl.

The widow's house was near the sea and above it, on the top of a low cliff. The rocks along the shore varied in height from six feet above the shingly level to forty feet, except at one spot, where there was a little open valley or chine, leading down to a sort of natural harbour that formerly had sheltered fishing boats, and along that coast-line the Pearl walked, a quarter of a mile to and fro.

Not once (except to the early Mass on Sundays) had Monica left the house, unless where the Pearl was walking, till they had been there a fortnight, when she went out one evening, and ascended a hill behind the village. The reason of this was, that she had seen from her window a man, with his arm in a sling, standing there, and looking intently at the very room where she had left the Pearl. This was not the first time that she had noticed him. Sometimes she had seen him standing there, sometimes walking on the cliff very early in the morning, or late in the evening, and apparently avoiding observation.

When she had mounted the hill and come near him, he turned round to go away. She saw his face and started.

"Good gracious me!" said she. "Why, it's the Squire."

"Well done," said Oswald. "I shouldn't have known you, if you hadn't spoken. What do you call yourselves?"

"Mrs. Lloyd Jones and Mary Thomas. But what ever is the matter, Sir?"

"It was that night, when Mr. Blastmore and I stopped the carriage."

"I haven't heard anything about it, Sir, only what my young lady told me that Father Bramsby had somehow driven up in time and saved her from that man. I thought you were bound to be in it too—but not having seen any

one at Hunterscombe since, and they told not to tell—”

“The fellow fired a revolver,” said Oswald, “but somehow just missed me. I suppose that I dodged him by instinct. Before he could fire again, Mr. Blastmore knocked the revolver out of his hand, and I lugged him into the road : but I forgot to look out for cold steel and so he sent a knife into my arm. Without the help of Mr. Blastmore’s hunting whip I should have been stabbed to the heart. The wound is of no consequence, though it has been ‘middling bad at times,’ as they say, and is still painful.”

“But suppose he comes again, Squire,—stealing round the corner?” said Monica.

“He won’t do that. He went on board his boat with too lively a recollection of Mr. Blastmore’s hunting whip. But there are others. That’s why I took a room over the shop. They think that I came here for sea air. The sling is very useful. I came here to protect her from—I don’t know what—probably from nothing ;—but you mustn’t let her know that I am here. There are reasons why she had better not know it. Good night.”

He walked away towards the sea, and Monica went back to reassure the Pearl, who might have been looking out of the window, and, in fact, had watched the whole proceeding.

“Who was the man up there?” said the Pearl.

“Some one staying here for the sea air, Ma’am,” said Monica.

“But you must know him,” said the Pearl.

“He doesn’t belong here,” said Monica.

“Yes, but you went up to him, and you were talking to him some time. Are you sure that he is not a spy?”

“Quite sure.”

“How can you be sure if you don’t know him?”

“Because I am.”

“But why? You can’t be sure of a man that you don’t know. You have some reason for keeping it back. You think that I should be frightened. But I am not going to be frightened. Who is he?”

“He didn’t tell me who he was, and I didn’t ask him.”

“How could he tell you who he was, or you ask, if you knew him before? Was he the man who played that abominable trick?”

"*Bless us all!*" Not he. The ragamuffin was glad enough to get away."

"Come now," said the Pearl, "can you venture to say in so many words that you do *not* know him?"

Monica, fairly driven into a corner, paused, considered the case as it stood, and finally chose another line.

"I can't tell a lie," she said. "You had better not ask. He came to protect you in case of need; but he charged me not to let you know that he is here."

"And I," said the Pearl, "ask you to tell me who he is. If you don't, I shall believe that he has taken you in—"

"No, *that* he hasn't," said Monica. "I can swear to it."

"But *I* can't," said the Pearl, "and after all that has happened, I shall not feel satisfied without knowing who he is."

"If you *will* be told," said Monica, "it's the young Squire of Hunterscombe, but he strictly charged me not to tell you."

The Pearl turned away and said nothing: whereupon Monica said more. "They think here," she said, "that he came here for the sea air; and so he might, because he looks very ill, and his left arm in a sling. But that isn't it. He came to protect *you*."

"Why is his arm in a sling?" said the Pearl.

"Because he was wounded in your defence," answered Monica, "when you had been put to sleep by some sort of drug. It was a mercy that he wasn't shot dead, for the bullet went close by him: and then, when he collared that wicked man, he got stabbed. He isn't fit to be about yet, only he will."

"I never heard of that," said the Pearl. "I only saw Father Bramsby afterwards. He was most kind in every way, but he never told me what had happened."

"Priests don't make a fuss about such things, not they," said Monica.

"I wish to thank him, and I *must* thank him," said the Pearl. "Please ask him to come here, that I may thank him."

"You did thank Father Bramsby," said Monica.

"I don't mean him," said the Pearl impatiently. "I saw him after it, and of course thanked him for all his kindness. Of course I didn't mean him."



CHAPTER LXII.

A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF WHAT, ABOUT THE SAME TIME, THE BARONESS DIABOLOUSKI WAS UP TO, ON HER ARRIVAL IN PARIS.



SHE said to her wretched husband suddenly, "We must call on your aunt this evening."

"Not I," said he, "No, I can't."

"Why not?" said she.

"Why, how could I have the face to go after what has happened?"

"After what?"

"After not hearing from Margaret, not hearing of her, not knowing whether she is alive or dead, but knowing very well that the whole affair is bad and scandalous, and *must* bring disgrace on us both."

"It would," said the Baroness calmly, "if we were on bad terms with her: but if she supports us, no one will suppose that we had anything to do with it."

"I only wish that you had not done it," said he.

"While you are wishing," said she, "you had better wish that *you* had not done it. You know that you took Lady RosSDen to London on purpose."

"I never supposed that you meant her to be tricked into a runaway match with such a brute and snob. Who on earth *could* have thought you meant *him*, when you spoke of a fascinating for—"

"Don't be so virtuously indignant," said the Baroness in the gentlest of tones. "You know very well that you never asked any questions about it, or him, and you knew

very well at the time what sort of a match it would and must be, under the circumstances."

"I knew nothing," said he, "except that you tempted me in a moment of weakness."

"You were tempted by the property."

"But you offered the temptation."

"When you had plainly shewn what you wanted."

"I don't want anything."

"Because you have the property. People don't want what they have."

"I don't wish to keep it."

"But you *must* keep it."

"I wish that it were not mine, and never could be mine."

The Baroness laughed unpleasantly, and said, "Nonsense. You know that you don't."

"Yes, I do," said Twerleby. "I hate the whole thing—"

"Including me," said the Baroness, "who am your best friend according to what you have quite freely chosen to be."

"What I am," said Twerleby, "is nothing to you. We have made a hideous marriage—you know how,—and we are hideously one, in a bond of legalized hatred. What I said I repeat. I wish that Maplethorpe were not mine and never could be mine. I am ashamed of having it. I *never* will go there. I bitterly regret that I ever—"

"So did Judas, when he went and hanged himself: but he had no contrition, neither have you. I say again that I am your best friend, according to what you have quite freely chosen to be. Must I again remind you of the fact that you have quite finally rejected the Faith and practice of the Catholic Church, the one and only religion, and therefore must make the best of what remains?"

"Have you not done the same?" said Twerleby in a hollow voice.

"I have," she said, "but not like you. Come now, you will stand or fall in this world by the result of this visit. Yes, you *must* go with me. If you do not, your aunt will know that you dare not, and she will attribute the plot exclusively to you."

Twerleby considered and went. His terrible wife went and considered. Not a word did either of them speak, but when they had reached the hotel where Lady Rossden was, Twerleby faced about and walked away at the rate of five

miles an hour. Lady Rossden, looking out of a window, marvelled much : firstly at their appearance in Paris then, secondly at their being together, and thirdly at her nephew's rapid retreat.

"They must have brought the letter," she thought. "But why did both come? and what is he going away for? I suppose he has left it with her to give me, and has gone after them. Oh! I *do* hope that somehow—"

"Oh! my dearest aunt, how very very dreadful!" said the Baroness Diabolouski, who had slipped into the room unheard and caught her unawares in her arms. "No letter from poor dear Margaret. Dear Augustus is so upset, that he really could not bear to see you until I had broken the news."

Lady Rossden's understanding of this pathetic address ended with the word "Aunt," the rest was a mere sound, suggestive of unexpected and incredible woe. She struggled violently to free herself, struggled with arms and legs, and even kicked viciously. The Baroness, perceiving that a prolonged embracement of the unwilling embraced, kicking her shins with great emphasis, would diminish her own dignity, let go; and then Lady Rossden spoke as she felt.

"Aunt?" she said, "what in the name of wonder do you mean?"

"I ought to have explained," said the Baroness. "Forgive me. You don't know and can't know what I have gone through. If you did, you would know how it was that I forgot to explain what I was going to say."

"I don't understand a word of all this, not a word," said Lady Rossden. "What do you mean by calling me 'Aunt?'"

"Simply," said the Baroness, "that, against my own inclination, and only to save him and you, I consented to be his wife."

Lady Rossden screamed, and the Baroness whispered "Hush! We shall be heard:" but Lady Rossden would not be silenced.

"I won't be called 'Aunt,'" she said. "What have you done with him? I am sorry to say, or even suspect, such a thing of a lady and a friend. But you must be very drunk."

"I am neither surprised nor offended by what you have

said," answered the Baroness. "I only sympathize with you, and—"

"I never heard of anything like it," said Lady RosSDen. "So ungrateful, and so sly, and so hypocritical, and so everything that no one could ever have thought of. I am surprised at you, and quite disappointed. I never could have believed it."

"Nor could I," said the Baroness, "till I saw that he would otherwise be lost. I will explain the case exactly, because, for his sake, I must. You know the report against Mr. Bramsby. It was not Mr. Bramsby. *It was Augustus.*"

"What!" said Lady RosSDen. "I wonder that you are not ashamed of saying such a thing, when it was you yourself that told me it was the other."

"How could I tell you the truth before I knew it?" said the Baroness.

"It isn't true. I don't believe a word of it."

"Then ask *him*, if you have the heart to do it after all that he has gone through. I could tell you her name; but I never will do that."

"I don't care about her name. Why was he to marry *you*?"

"Because it was going on, and she would have made the whole thing public, and forced him to marry her, of course. But now that he *is* married, she sees it is of no use, and for her *own* sake will keep quiet. Whatever I am, at all events, I—oh! you don't *know* what I have saved him from, what I have saved you from—"

Neither did the Baroness, but the mysterious hint overpowered Lady RosSDen. She gave up the struggle and began to cry. The Baroness followed up her advantage.

"Moreover," she said, "I have saved him from a horrible imputation. His taking you to London, and your leaving Margaret behind, had been remarked upon in a way that was very damaging to both of you, and the event of course pointed out that he was an accomplice for the purpose of getting Maplethorpe, and that you were cognizant of it."

"Good gracious! You don't mean to say that anyone—"

"Yes, of course. Ask yourself, what you would think of others under the same circumstances."

"Oh! oh! oh! . . ." said Lady RosSDen. "Was ever a poor creature so persecuted and so calumniated?"

"You *would* have been calumniated," said the Baroness, "most certainly you would, but for me. As it is, you will not. It is well known that I nearly lost my life at the ford in trying to stop the elopement. By marrying him afterwards I have cleared his character; because no one could possibly suppose that I would marry a man who had plotted to do what I had risked my life to prevent. I have cleared his character, and saved you from being misjudged."

Lady RosSDen, panic-stricken by this vivid picture of what had, in fact, been brought about by herself, paused, reconsidered the crisis, understood gradually, and with a rueful countenance, gave in.

"Thank you, my dear," said she. "I am sorry that I spoke as I did. Tell him to come and see me."

The Baroness Diabolouski remained some time with her, comforting and comforted. Her success was complete; but she felt sorry that her dear Augustus had not been present at the interview, and heard her make an open confession for him.





CHAPTER LXIII.



PRECISELY at two o'clock on the following day, Oswald was announced by Monica; and the Pearl, rising from her chair, stood ready to receive his respects, as such. Her intention was to thank him warmly for what he had done against the General Foreigner, praise his courage, magnify his wound, and then retire coldly as herself, while he went away as himself.

"I am sorry," she said, "to have given you the trouble of coming: but I shall have no other opportunity of thanking you—"

"What I did," said Oswald, "I did, such as it was, for you, not for thanks. Therefore I will shorten the opportunity."

He was almost as pale as a corpse, and spoke unlike himself; but he meant what he said, and when he had said it, began to retire coldly. The Pearl, who like Armida, had shot the arrow and immediately wished that she had not, though still against him in spite of her affection, tried to speak suitably without condoning those dreadful "respects," which had been sent after everything else of the most unforgivable sort.

"I am afraid," she said, "that you are suffering from your wound."

He caught up the one book from the table, turned over the pages and said, "I am afraid that you are suffering from such books as this. It would have broken your father's heart to see you taking in and assimilating such poisonous trash."

"Are you sure," said she, "that he would have objected to this book?"

"Absolutely certain, from my own knowledge of his mind, and from his own words."

"Then why did he never caution me?"

"Because he never dreamt of your requiring it. Would you believe my uncle, who has the same means of knowing that I have?"

"Yes, indeed I would. But I don't mean—"

"Then I implore you, for your own sake, to ask him. Will you?"

"Yes, if you like. But why?"

"Because no one else knows it so well, except myself. Will you?"

"Yes, I will."

He bowed and opened the door. The Pearl followed and shut it.

"Don't go in that way," she said. "No, you must not."

"Let us be open about that," said he. "You sent for me, to thank me for doing what in fact was my duty to do. It was my duty to do it for the sake of your father, my dearest friend, and for you, as a newly made stranger, and also by reason of Catholic charity which imposes on us the obligation of helping in need. The wound is a sentimental grievance, not worth a thought, and partly due to my own carelessness. All this has now been said, and I have no further reason for staying. It cannot be advisable for you to be talking with a man whose acquaintance is to you so undesirable, that you had to cut him twice in the presence of your groom, and mark him in his own county as a man not fit to be known. Of your judgment about that I say nothing. It is not for me to defend myself against unknown charges; but as you have so judged me to be, it is not right that I should be here."

"I must ask you," said the Pearl, trying in vain to hide her emotion, "I must beg and beseech you to judge me charitably about that. What are your objections to the book?"

"I have only glanced at it," said Oswald, "but in the first place, it condemns itself by supposing Almighty God to be what He is not, nor possibly could be."

"Perhaps the book is beyond me," said the Pearl.

"No," said Oswald, "but you ought to be beyond the book. You have been set wrong about the Being of God. Is it not so?"

"I have," said the Pearl, "and therefore my father's conversion is of no use to me. I never can believe now."

"I could have helped you to help yourself out of that," said Oswald: "but I have been here too long. You have not had to cut my uncle. Ask *him*."

Before she could answer, he was out of the house and walking towards the hill, to watch over her without hope of the only reward that he cared for in this world, but not without hope of helping her indirectly along the way that she had lost. This was all that he could hope for in his extremity. He might have explained all, if she had been less reticent; but how could she question him about so mysteriously abominable a thing as a false marriage?

Neither he, in his one stuffy room over the shop, nor she in the widow's best bedroom that smelt of old apples and stale smoke, could sleep, or even doze, during the whole course of that strangely long night. Our life here is very short, and the fleeting hours are continually winning the race against our work or our idleness; but it seemed otherwise then in those two rooms. The church clock, striking the hours, only marked the excessive length of suffering endured between.



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CHAPTER LXIV.



HAVING satisfactorily reconciled Lady Rosdden to her dear Augustus, the Baroness Diabolouski and her unwilling husband, (who despised himself without the comfort of contrition and hated her for being the instrument of Divine justice against him,) left Paris the next afternoon, travelling all night on their way to Maplethorpe. There their presence was required by themselves but not by anyone else. The Pearl was then, all night long, tossing about on her uneven mattress, that mockingly symbolized the state of her mind. Oswald was, after all, the hero of her life, her model of a man and the unacknowledged object of her complete love; but those dreadful lines danced before her in letters of red hot iron. How could she ask him about them? And how could she be sure without knowing? In the meanwhile she was not believing as her father had believed, while yet wishing that she could. Had not Oswald said that he could help her to help herself about it? The question occurred again and again, till after she had risen, and as soon as Monica appeared, she sent for him again, and again he came. About ten o'clock in the morning, Monica, having looked out for his coming, let him in. When he entered the room, he bowed reverentially and said, "What can I do for you?"

And then there was a dead silence. Both were trembling inwardly with suppressed emotion, and neither he nor she knew how much it cost the other to be self-controlled.

At last she said, "I understood you to say that you

could help me to believe, as my father believed before he died."

"I can help you, perhaps, to help yourself," said Oswald; "but not in a few minutes, nor without some stiff thinking."

"Time and trouble," said the Pearl, "are as nothing to me, in comparison with what I want."

"We must begin, I think," said he, "from the foundation of all religious beliefs, the Being of God."

"We must," said she.

"But you will be tired," said he, "if you stand all the time."

The Pearl sat down, but he remained standing.

"Won't you sit down?" she said.

"No, thank you," said he. "I am only here as a sort of finger-post. Finger-posts don't sit down. That there is and must be a First Cause of all things cannot be denied by anyone who has the use of reason. Take for instance ourselves, who were born because we had parents, and live a few years and then die. Are we not born because we had a father and mother? And were they not born because they had a father and mother, who had a father and mother, and so on? Where could the fathers and mothers have begun, if there were no fathers and mothers to begin with? There must be some beginning of things that successively are, when before they were not."

"Yes, I see that," said the Pearl.

"The same reasoning," said Oswald, "applies to everything that once was not and afterwards was. This implies a cause of some sort, that was before anything else was. We cannot deny that there is a First Cause without implicitly affirming thereby one of two evident impossibilities—namely, either that there is an infinite succession of causes and effects, without any conceivable cause to begin the chain—which is impossible—or we must suppose that a time was when infinite nothing was and something came out of it. This is contrary to common sense. We know from our own experience, as reasonable beings, that out of nothing, nothing comes—*ex nihilo nihil fit*—as the old axiom says. Is it not so?"

"Yes, certainly," said the Pearl.

"Since then there cannot be an infinite succession of causes and effects, and because there cannot be a succession

from nothing, nor an effect without a cause, there must be some sort of First Cause that caused the first effect in the chain of causes and effects."

"Say that again," said the Pearl. "Say it slowly."

He did so, and after a while, she said, "Yes, I see it."

"And then," said Oswald, "what have we to say about this First Cause, whatever it is? Has it begun from absolute nothing? And so created itself before it was? Or could it never have begun?"

"No," said the Pearl, "that is nonsense, a thing cannot create itself out of nothing. Out of nothing nothing comes, as you have said. And if it never had begun, there would be nothing now, instead of all the things that we see and know to exist."

"Just so. You have a clear head. This cause then, being the First Cause, could not, as we have seen, be caused by another cause—by anything else, for it is the First. Nor could it have created itself, because that would suppose it to have acted before it was. It therefore is uncreated—in other words, self-existing."

"Yes," answered the Pearl, "it *is* very stiff: but you have made it clear. I understand what you have said."

"You admit, then," said Oswald, "an uncreated, self-existing First Cause which, never having begun, must eternally have been."

"Yes, I do."

"Then the eternal, necessary First Cause cannot be finite—how could it? For the finite implies a limit, beyond which the said finite cannot go—does it not?"

"Yes," said the Pearl.

"And a limit implies not only a limiter (a something which would be superior to the First Cause and that is nonsense) but it also implies something beyond, where those limits cease to be. Who is there to limit the Being of the Eternal First Cause?"

"Nothing," said the Pearl.

"Could it have limited itself before it eternally was?"

"Of course not," she said. "I see that, being the First Cause, uncreated and eternal, it must also have been infinite, and must be infinite and must always be infinite. Its ever coming to an end is therefore inconceivable."

"You will also admit," said he, "that the eternal

necessary and infinite First Cause must be intelligent, as being the cause of intelligence in us; because effects cannot exceed the nature of their cause—or, as an old axiom puts it, *Nothing can give what it has not*. For instance, a plant, having the nature of a plant, generates a plant, not a cow or donkey. An empty well will give no water. A cow or a horse, not being intelligent, cannot build its own stables nor teach latin: and we in our own personal experience know that we cannot give anything but what we already have. Therefore, as there are intelligent beings in the world, their First Cause must be intelligent."

"Yes, undoubtedly," said the Pearl.

"Further, the First Cause, being Infinite, must as we have seen, be infinitely all and what It is. It could not be infinite, and also partly finite; for a thing cannot be anything and not be so, at the same time. Can it?"

"No," said the Pearl. "Common sense denies that. I admit that whatever the First Cause is, It must be infinitely what It is."

"And being eternal and necessary," said he, "must always have been, and always is, and always will be all that It is. In other words, Its Essence, *or what It is*—is the same as Its Being, so that, instead of having Being, like us, It *is* Its Being."

"Please repeat that," said the Pearl, "and say it slowly, that I may take it in."

"Let me write it all down for you," said Oswald, "and send it by Monica. You have understood wonderfully well, but all this is new to you."

"Do," said the Pearl, "that I may read it again and again, and think of it. I see that you are leading up to what I want. If the end fulfils what the beginning promises, I shall be able to believe like my father."

"*You will*," said Oswald, "but not in one morning. We have seen that the First Cause necessarily and eternally was and is and always will be. Which comes to this—that it never could not have been, nor ever could not be, nor possibly could not be what It is. Which means that what It is, is one with Its Being. Don't you see that Its true name—or rather His true name—the name of the Infinite, Eternal, Necessary, Self-existent, Intelligent First Cause is the Incommunicable Name—I AM?"

"That is splendid—I do see it," said the Pearl.

"Then," said he, "we have shown that the absolutely necessary First Cause is and must be God. We must work on from that. Would to-morrow afternoon be too soon?"

"No, not soon enough," said she; "but let it be so."

She rose and looked up, but he had gone.





CHAPTER XLV.



EAR Augustus and his terrible wife, who had forced him to marry her by means of his evil deeds, and then reconciled Lady Rossden by making an open confession for him in a pleading way, arrived at Maplethorpe about the middle of the following day, having previously given notice of their coming by a postcard.

Said he to her in the library, "I can't stay here, and I won't. We have heard nothing of her, and we know that she never could have tolerated such a brute. She must have been murdered. I have dreamt of that—seen her, seen her often, even in the daytime."

"Don't be silly," said she, "but read your letters."

"I won't," he said. "I shall ride to the place this very day and make enquiries along the coast."

"Do, if you like," said she: "but you had better have luncheon first, or you will be exhausted and fancy that you have seen her ghost."

"By-the-by," said he, "I want the codicil."

"He may have it now," thought she. "I have no further use for it."

While Twerleby went into the dining-room to ring the bell for immediate luncheon, she went upstairs to find the precious document in a drawer, where she had hurriedly put it before her decisive journey. The key, being in her pocket, was quickly found, but not the codicil. It was not there. How could this be? It certainly could not have picked the lock, nor crept out through the keyhole; yet

certainly it was not there. For the first time in her life she experienced the prickly heat that she had so often caused in Twerleby. What would be done with it? What if it revoked the clause against marrying a foreigner, and enabled the General Foreigner to eject her from Maplethorpe?

"But no," she thought. "It could not have been taken out. The lock is quite secure and in perfect order. Everything else in the drawer is just as I left it. I must, in my hurry and agitation, have put it somewhere else. But where? Perhaps I burnt it by mistake that night, with those other papers that had to be destroyed. Yes, that must be it, if I can't find it."

When she joined her dear Augustus at luncheon, she said, "I must get it by-and-bye. I have too much to do just now."

Twerleby, having had a good luncheon or early dinner, mounted his horse about two o'clock to verify the Pearl's embarkation, while she, at Old Sleetham, was again listening to Oswald, who, standing as before, said: "We have seen that the First Cause must eternally be, and must be Almighty God. We have now to consider what He is to us, and we in relation to Him. That He is infinitely intelligent we have proved, though, strictly speaking, the words are inadequate, because in fact He is infinitely all that intelligence is. If we deny *His* intelligence, we must either deny that *we* are intelligent (though we know that we are so) or admit an effect without a cause,—a something out of nothing,—or say that He gives what He has not.

"But then, what is He to us? That is the practical question. Does He really care for us, or does He merely cause us to be, and then leave us to natural causes only? Does He cause us to be, and to live a short and more or less troubled life, longing hopelessly for permanent happiness and then to fade away and perish like the autumn leaves or the clouds at sunset? Or does He care for us, protect us, reward and punish us hereafter, according to what we do now? We cannot infer either conclusion merely from the fact of His intelligence. We must enquire about His will. Need I prove that He has and must have a free will?"

"No," said the Pearl. "I can prove that by what you said about His intelligence. If we deny His free will, we must either deny that we have a free will (though we

know that we have it,) or admit an effect without a cause, or say that He gives what He has not."

"Very well said," answered Oswald. "You will see then that the question before us resolves itself into this: Is He good? He must be either good or bad. He must, as we proved yesterday, be infinitely whatever He is. Which is He? The true definition of evil will furnish us with the answer."

"What is it?" said she. "But *do* sit down."

"Privation of good," said he. ("Thank you, I had rather stand, if I may.) Evil is privation of good, as darkness is privation of light. We predicate evil of men or of actions, as we predicate darkness of a night or of a room; but the night or the room is dark because light is more or less wanting in them; and men or actions are bad by reason of having more or less rejected the good that had been in them, and might be still if they would have it. Common parlance, which always expresses the meaning of common sense and of experience, tells us the same thing. People say, 'there is very little good in him now;' or, 'there never was much good in him;' or 'that had a very deleterious effect on him' (meaning 'a rubbing out'): and when we hear of anyone going to the bad, we always have an impression of something that once was, but now is not. As a total absence of light would be destructive of all animal and vegetable life, so would a total privation of good be totally destructive in the moral order. This, predicated of God, would imply eternal and necessary privation by no one—because no one could be before the First Cause—and a total privation of good in us, as the effect of that impossibly deprived First Cause. We should have to admit nonsense and contradictions without end. His goodness therefore—whether we say incorrectly that He *has* it, or correctly that He *is* it—is infinite, and therefore excludes the possibility of evil, because it excludes the possibility of limit and of privation. Is it not so?"

"Yes," said the Pearl. "His goodness must be infinite."

"But then," said he, "how can infinite goodness be reconciled with causing us to be what we are—beings who love and hope, and long for perfect and permanent happiness not attainable here, but liable to sorrow, sickness and trouble of all sorts, and knowing that we have to die at

last—how can infinite goodness be reconciled with that, if that is finally all that we may hope for? Reason and common sense teach us to infer that His goodness must be supereminently and without defect what we understand goodness to mean: for otherwise we stand between two impossibilities—either that he endowed us with nobler qualities than He possesses Himself, or that there are two sorts of goodness, and both these propositions are absurd. He must then, by the necessity of His own perfection, be more wise and more provident for our welfare than our highest ideal of any earthly father would be, more tenderly loving than any mother;—for, as we have seen and know by experience, ‘no effect can exceed the nature of its cause,’ and therefore the creatures that He has caused cannot be superior to Himself. Is it probable then that He, more wise than the most wise of fathers, more loving than the most loving mother, should leave us to go our own way without any knowledge of Him—without anything to hope for, to strive after, without anything worthy of the aspirations implanted in us and of the gifts with which we are endowed? Is it probable that He simply leaves us to ourselves?”

“No,” said the Pearl. “It is not.”

“Or is it probable that He expects us to believe and act in obedience to Him, without giving us any certain means of knowing what? Would any human father or mother do that to a child?”

“No, certainly not.”

“But then,” said he, “how can that be done, when God is invisible to us? Must there not be some delegated and visible authority on which we can rely?”

“Yes, there must,” said the Pearl. “I see it clearly. That was what set me wrong. I saw that the Bible cannot prove its own inspiration, and as I had been brought up to depend on the Bible only, I lost all belief.”

“For a time,” said Oswald, “but only to find the Truth. We have come to this then—that there must be a visible Church. We must look for that and find it. To-morrow I must be at Hunterscombe till the evening; but the day after—”

While she waited for the rest of the sentence, he disappeared, and Monica came in, saying :

"Who would ever have thought it!"

"You, dear Monica—Mary, I mean,—what has disturbed you?" said the Pearl.

"That Baroness has been and married Mr. Twerleby, who is as bad as her, and they're coming to Maplethorpe, making as if the whole place belonged to them, and making believe you ran away with that rascal, who shot at the young squire and stabbed him, so that he isn't well yet, nor likely to be for a long time; and it's a mercy he wasn't killed. Oh! it was a brave thing for the young squire to go and collar such a savage inside a fly, with loaded pistols pointed at him and knives and daggers and everything else to murder him—and was lugged out by the young squire in spite of it all (while Father Bramsby held their horses), and got such a hiding for his pains from Mr. Blastmore that he bellowed all over the place!"

The Pearl turned away for a minute or two and looked out of the window towards the sea. Then she said, "I am not surprised at the story about me. I must bear it until I can show myself. But I can hardly believe that my cousin has married the Baroness Diabolouski."

"He has though," said Monica; "the postman told me about it. He doesn't know who I am, but his brother lives under-gardener at Blumbury. It's my opinion that he and she were at it all the time. There's something wrong about that codicil, I'm sure. And how was it that she made you walk with her that evening, so as to go round by the ford and get you into the trap, which *Suprême* heard her at it? It's my belief if that rascal had got you into that boat, you'd never have come back no more, and most likely was paid high by them for doing it—and, but for the young squire, he'd have done it, too—but he did catch it from Mr. Blastmore; that's some comfort. And then to go and marry him just afterwards, as if nobody could see anything! It's all as plain as plain to me."

The Pearl began to see much, including the likelihood of her having been purposely deceived about Oswald; but how was she to know the truth about those dreadful lines? The divine poet whose words they were, never thought of the mischief that his beautiful stanzas would do, after more than six hundred years, at Old Sleetham, where no one, except the Pearl, knew a word of the language in which he wrote.

Oswald went up the hill. The Pearl went out and walked by the sea, Monica watching. Seeing a horseman riding along the cliff, she made a sign; at which the Pearl retreated behind a jutting rock. Twerleby was making vain enquiries along the coast. The Baroness in the shrubbery at Maplethorpe was consulting with herself. After a while each of them was somewhere else, and, whatever the others were doing between ten and eleven o'clock, Twerleby did then reappear at Maplethorpe, where he let himself gently down from his horse, tired and stiff after an uncomfortable ride of fifty miles along hard roads on a hot day.

"What have you done, after all this ridiculous riding?" said his terrible wife, as soon as he was alone with her.

He muttered, "I have seen Margaret, alive or dead, at old Sleetham, five miles along the coast beyond the place where any vessel could have come inshore to take her away. I saw her—saw her as clearly as I see you—standing by the sea. Just then, my horse blundered over a rolling stone, and when I looked again she was gone. Don't ask me any more."

"I don't wish to ask you any more," thought she. "It's all fancy, I feel sure, but I shall go there myself."

Twerleby dined or supped alone, drank a bottle of champagne, and going to bed, slept heavily.





CHAPTER XLVI.



AT six o'clock in the morning, the Baroness Diabolouski, or Mrs. Augustus Twerleby—whichever she might please to be or others please to call her,—arose to see for herself. Her preparations for departure were few and quick, easily made and punctually executed. She had only to order the carriage and an early breakfast. The train and a Backwater fly would do the rest. But her preparations for the contingent future, in relation to the Pearl's present state of life, were difficult and fearful; for if the Pearl really was at Old Sleetham, the General Foreigner's enterprise had failed, and Maplethorpe would not belong to Augustus Twerleby.

"This *must not* be," she said to herself in thought. "I must provide against that at any and every cost. But no. It *could* not have failed. Would he not have written to me, if it had? He certainly would." So she told herself, knowing nothing of what had befallen the General Foreigner, nor of his conviction that it was she who had betrayed him.

And then she went again, for the tenth time, to look for the lost codicil. A clock struck seven, and she had ordered the carriage to be ready at half-past. After searching till it was nearly time to go, she muttered under her breath, "Waste of time. I must have destroyed it among those other papers that I burnt. Yes, I burnt it—and the best thing too. Would that I were as sure about what I am going for! If she *is* there, she must be hiding there, suspecting me, waiting till she comes of age, waiting till she

can turn us out with lost characters, to be cut off by Lady RosSDen and left in beggary, hating each other. It must *not* be. I must provide against that at any cost, even the worst—yes, even *that*—”

She caught sight of her own face in the looking glass, and started at the expression seen. But she turned away and said, “I have gone too far to retreat now. *I will not.*”

By this time the carriage was at the door. When the coachman saw her appear, he said to himself, “A rum sort of a honeymoon.”

Before Twerleby had awaked from a troubled sleep, tired and anxious, the train, with her in it, had arrived at Backwater, and she, in a railway fly, was on her way to Old Sleetham. While he was looking at his breakfast without eating it, she, after a hideous drive of an hour and a half in a comfortable fly along a beautiful coast on a lovely summer’s morning, stopped at the village shop. Oswald, who was then in his room over the shop, writing a letter, not having started yet for Hunterscombe, heard the fly stop, and looked out. The Baroness was closely veiled and habited in a solemn robe of black serge, quite unsuited to the curious honeymoon, of which he had heard from Monica ; so that if she had not spoken, he would only have suspected that somebody was up to something, with evil intent against the Pearl, and therefore watched her proceedings. But it happened that he heard her say :

“I believe a great friend of mine is lodging in or near the village. Can you tell me where to find her?”

“There’s no one, Mum,” the shop woman said, “in the place but a lady and her maid—a invalid, I’m told she is ; they’ve got apartments at Mrs. Cox’s up at Sea View Cottage. It is round by that road to the right.”

Oswald, recognizing the voice, had seized a cloak, and slouching a hat over his face, rushed down the narrow staircase, out by a back way and then by a short cut to Sea View Cottage, while the Baroness was leaving the shop, and giving directions to the fly-man. He found the Pearl and Monica near the widow’s house, and said :

“The Baroness Diabolouski. Go in—here to the left, and in by the back door. Monica, you must put her off the scent. Put a pebble in your mouth and make yourself look old. I shall come back.”

He disappeared, and they went in. Monica had a little rehearsal of her part, while the Baroness or Mrs. Augustus Twerleby was coming on by the road. At last the rusty door bell was rung, and Monica opened the door.

Mrs. Augustus Twerleby, otherwise the Baroness, not knowing whom to ask for by a definite name, had to be vulgar in self-defence, and said, "Is your mistress at home?"

"Which, M'm?" said Monica in a mumbling voice, as if she had only one tooth, and that one were very loose.

"The lady who is lodging here, my friend, Miss—" here the Baroness had an opportune fit of coughing, and then coughed out the words "at home?"

"There ain't no Miss here."

"I meant to say Mrs. Is she at home?"

"Who, M'm?"

The Baroness coughed again, and supposed herself to have not heard the embarrassing question. Then she said, "Is she at home?"

"What, Mrs. Lloyd Jones, M'm?"

"Yes," answered the Baroness boldly. "Is Mrs. Lloyd Jones at home?"

"No, M'm."

"When will she be at home?"

"Can't say, M'm."

The Baroness was bothered, but not disconcerted.

"I will call again," she said. "I must see her. Perhaps I should find her now by the sea."

"Very likely, M'm. But excuse me—have you seen her lately?"

"Not very lately," said the Baroness; "why do you ask?"

Monica put on a confidential manner and said, "Then I shouldn't advise it, M'm."

"Why not?"

"Well, M'm, between you and me," she said, "She ain't safe now. The doctor sent her here under my charge; but she's got worse. I can manage her, but she takes likes and dislikes: and as you know, M'm, she's a head taller than you, and that muscular, there's no doing anything with her when she takes on. She'd as soon push you into the sea, or pitch anyone down stairs, or take the poker to 'em, as look at 'em,—and—I beg your pardon, M'm,

—you must mind how you stand there under her window, because, if she should happen to have come in unbeknown to me, she's as likely as not to empty the water jug all over you—that's one of her games—”

At this moment a jugful of cold water came plump on the Baroness Diabolouski's head and face, from the window above, nearly taking her breath away, and soaking into her serge dress.

“Oh dear!” said Monica. “I was afraid how it would be. I'm very sorry, M'm, I'm sure. I daren't ask you in to get dried; for I see she's in one of her tantrums, and as like as not to send the coal scuttle at you.”

“She ought to be in a lunatic asylum,” said the Baroness, walking away. “I shall make this known.”

“You shouldn't have come here, M'm,” said Monica, walking after her. “Excuse me, M'm, but it's my belief you didn't know who you was asking for, and made believe you'd a cough to get out of it, and got her name from me, and pretended she was your friend when you never set eyes on her. It's my belief you wanted to get money out of her. I shall go and tell of you, M'm.”

The Baroness gave no answer, but retreated speedily.

Monica, who had rehearsed her tactics with the Pearl, and led the dialogue up to the water throwing point, went back to laugh and rejoice; but she ruled that Old Sleetham was no longer a safe place for the Pearl in hiding.

“We must go,” she said, “to Humbleton-in-the-Hole—my mother can make shift for us,—and get the luggage afterwards. The ducking settled the business for to-day, but we might have her back again, talking to folks and finding out things. But goodness gracious, there she is, walking down towards the village as if she meant asking questions. It won't do to let her do that. I must go and see.”

Out went Monica, having an old shawl over her head, and replacing the pebble in her mouth.

“Please, M'm,” said she, hobbling up to the drenched Baroness, “you'd better be off, or you'll get into trouble.”

“I assure you,” said the Baroness, “that I have no wish to stay in a place where lunatics are allowed to empty their water jugs on people's heads; but I wish to walk on towards Backwater in this pleasant sun and dry my clothes. Could you help me to find some one who would go back and

order my fly-man to follow me? He is putting up at the public-house."

"I will M'm, if you don't mind my going in first for a minute or two."

"If he catches me up in half-an-hour," said the Baroness, "it will be soon enough. Thank you so much."

"Don't mention it, M'm," said Monica. "Good day, M'm, and a pleasant drive, leastways when you're dried."

The Baroness, feeling wet and cold, and, in spite of her kept up dignity, much diminished within, walked on at a quick pace, assuring herself that her dear Augustus would suffer for her failure and the success of the water jug.

Monica went in, reported progress to the Pearl and, after watching the Baroness nearly out of sight on the Backwater road, sought the widow, whom she found darning a black stocking.

"I am sorry to say," said Monica, "that we must, quite unexpectedly, go to-day. You have been very good to us, and we should like to stay on; but we can't. One of these days—and it won't be long first—you shall know all about it, and won't be the worse for it, I can tell you."

"Bless you!" said the widow, "I know a gentleman and lady when I see 'em."

"I was sure of that," said Monica; "but I had to tell you about it, in case of anyone coming to pry and ask about us. One of them came to the door a little while ago, pretending that she was a friend, only I know what she was about. They want, you see, to play tricks with my lady's property. I can't explain it all now, but that's how it is, and I want you to stand by us just now, like a good woman as you are."

"That I will," said the widow. "If anyone comes, I know nothing."

"Thank you," said Monica; "I knew that we should be able to count upon you. Well, I must go and see about the things."

"Can I be of any use to you?" said the widow.

"Not just now, thank you," said Monica.

Away she went, out of the house, and thence to the George and Dragon, where the fly was waiting for the Baroness, who was expecting it to follow her.

The fly-horse was eating oats out of a canvass nose-bag.

The fly-man stood near, with his legs wide apart, smoking a pipe. Said Monica, "Do you want a job?"

"No," said he. "I've got one. I'm waiting for the lady."

"What, the one that was dressed in black, and went looking about? Bless your heart, you may whistle for her. I saw her going right away."

"D—n it," said he, taking off the nose-bag, "but I shall find her further on."

"Don't you know the bridle-road to the right further on," said she, "that goes four different ways along the hill? You might as well look for a needle in a bundle of hay. I saw her making off as fast as she could walk. You won't see her again, I can tell you."

"A pretty go," said he, "to be done in that way."

"Never mind," said Monica, "you won't lose a penny by it, if you'll take Mrs. Jones and me and some luggage to Humbleton-in-the-Hole."

"Where's that?" said he.

"Three miles, or rather less, over the hill. I can show you the way."

"All right," said he. "I'm your man."

The Pearl had been packing in a rough and hurried way, so that in ten minutes more they were ready to start. Monica then slipped out by the back door, told Oswald whither and why they were going, and ran back. Two minutes afterwards, they were on their way to Humbleton-in-the-Hole, while the Baroness Diabolouski, trudging in her wet clothes along the dusty road, was expecting the fly that never would come. The fly went on under Monica's direction a mile and a half, or rather more, beyond the doubtful bridle-road. Then they turned into a rough carriage-road over the hills, and before one o'clock drew up at the entrance of Humbleton-in-the-Hole, a small village built of stone in the hollow of a grassy hill.

"Pull up here," said Monica to the flyman on the box. "I must say a word to my mother," she added inside, as an explanation to the Pearl.

"I understand," said the Pearl, and away went Monica to the house of her mother, who came out to see the strange visitor.

"Mother, I want to speak to you a moment very particularly," said Monica.

"Bless us all!" said her mother. "What is the meaning of this? I shouldn't have known you anywhere till you spoke."

"You shall hear how it is by-and-by," said Monica. "Father Bramsby knows all about it, and the young Squire too. Please take us in. It will be all right."

"Well, Monica," said her mother, "you were always a good girl. Do as you like about it."

Before two o'clock they were established at Humbleton-in-the-Hole in Mrs. Greswolde's spare rooms (usually let to lodgers in the summer) as Mrs. Green and Anne Widdgett. Oswald was then at Hunterscombe, and the Baroness Diabolouski, still trudging along the road, was four miles at least from Backwater. The sun had nearly dried her clothes, but the dust had stuck to the damp serge, and the jug full of water had spoilt her hat; so that she was ashamed of showing herself to anyone who might happen to know her. She was too late for the four o'clock train, and had to keep out of sight waiting for another that started at half past six. The consequence was that, inasmuch as she had ordered the carriage to meet the earlier train only, and there were no flies at West Grumley station, she was necessitated to walk. It was nearly nine when Twerleby, smoking under the beeches in the park, saw her limping up towards the house, tired, footsore and evidently wrathful.

"Are you not ashamed," she said, "of making me go on such a fool's errand?"

"How could I make you go," said Twerleby, "when I didn't even know that you were going, and don't know now where you have been?"

"Nonsense, you *must* know that. How could I help going to Old Sleetham, after you had declared that you saw Margaret there?"

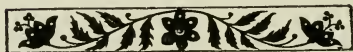
"Did you find her?"

"No, of course not. I was a fool to put any—even the faintest—belief in your cock-and-bull story. The woman that you fancied you saw by the sea (if you saw anything at all but a thing of your own imagination) is a Mrs. Jones, as mad as a March hare, the only lodger in the place, a head taller than me—I found that out incidentally,—and with an ugly elderly maid that certainly is not that Monica Greswolde. When I called at the cottage, Mrs. Jones poured a whole

jug full of water all over me, from her bedroom window (a usual trick of hers I was told) wetting me all through and spoiling my hat ; and forcing me to walk on so far in hopes of drying my clothes, that I missed the fly, and had to walk all the way to Backwater, and all the way from West Grumley,—thirteen and four—seventeen miles, besides making all the servants wonder where I have been.”

“Did you wish to find Margaret at Old Sleetham ?” said Twerleby.

“No more than *you* do,” said she. “Come into the house with me, and let us be seen together—for once.”





CHAPTER XLVII.



THE Baroness Diabolouski, having slept off her fatigue, arose late the next morning, footsore and stiff, but grimly glad. Had she not, to her own complete satisfaction, proved that Old Sleetham was not harbouring the Pearl? Clearly the Pearl had been induced by fear or persuasion to marry the General Foreigner; for her favourite maid had disappeared the day after the elopement, and taken with her, it was believed, some luggage belonging to the Pearl. All this was quite certain according to the relativity of truth; but the Pearl was at Humbleton-in-the-Hole, and Oswald walking over the hills to see her again.

Again, and perhaps no more. They could be clear to each other about the way to the Church of God, but not about themselves. They were silenced by each other, without any apparent means of breaking the silence; and he felt that on such terms he could not endure her presence after the occasion had passed away. The Pearl was thinking almost in the same words, when the door was opened, and he stood before her like a dying man revived for a supreme effort.

"We left off," he said, "at the necessity of a visible Church: but we had better recapitulate as briefly as possible, so that we may not have any break in the reasoning."

"Yes, I should like to hear that," said the Pearl, "and then what follows, however long it may be. Standing will not tire me. I have passed through so much more and lived through it. I shall stand all the time, unless you sit."

"Then of course I must," said Oswald, sitting down. "I am afraid that my recapitulation will seem too long by its being unbroken, but such as it is, it comes to this :

"That there is and must be *a* First Cause is evident, because we cannot deny it without implicitly affirming one or other of two evident impossibilities,—either an infinite succession of causes and effects, or a time when Nothing inconceivably was. An infinite succession of causes and effects is evidently nonsense, for the self-evident reason that, since there cannot be a succession from nothing, nor an effect without a preceding cause, we must admit a First Cause of some sort. But then, by reason of *what* could this Uncaused *be* ? It could not have created itself—it could not have acted before it was : and therefore, inasmuch as there is no third thing between beginning and not beginning, it must eternally and necessarily have been—or rather, since it evidently transcends time, must eternally *be*. Is that clear ?"

"As clear as the light of day," said the Pearl.

"It cannot be finite," said Oswald, "for the finite implies limitation, and limitation implies a limiter. But who or what could limit the Eternal and Necessary First Cause ? It must be intelligent also, because it causes intelligent creatures to be : for if it were not intelligent, it would impossibly give what it has not—and must be infinitely so, because that which is infinite, and necessarily is, must infinitely be what it is."

"Here," said the Pearl, "we may drop the 'it' and say 'He,' because that which eternally, necessarily and infinitely is, can be no other than *He* who is called God, and His name—as you said the other day—is the incommunicable Name, I AM."

"And here," said Oswald, "we come to the practical question, What is He to us and we to Him ? Does He merely cause us to be, and then leave us to natural causes—leave us to live a little while, more or less in sorrow and suffering, to know our visible end, and then to perish ? Or does He care for us, protect us, reward or punish us according to what we do here ? And if so, what does He require us to do ? And how are we to know what He requires from us, unless He has given some means of knowing ? These questions involve the further question, is He good ?"

"We find in ourselves, all theories to the contrary notwithstanding, a free will, quite distinct from unintelligent instinct : and we find that, according to our use of it, we are good or bad. Therefore God, being infinitely intelligent, or rather infinite Intelligence, must have a free will, which must be good or bad. Can He possibly be bad? To answer that question, we must enquire firstly what evil is.

"If we examine our own experience, we shall find that evil is privation of good, as darkness is privation of light. There are evil men and evil actions, dark nights and dark places, but as a room is dark by reason of the light that is not there, so is a man bad by reason of the good that is not in him. Common parlance, which never can be safely disregarded, confirms the fact. People say, for instance, 'There is not much good in him,' or he has deteriorated, which means that he has become worse—and worse means less good. All this expresses the want of something that once was in him. A total privation of good would mean a total privation of moral life, as a total privation of light implies a total privation of animal and vegetable life. Such privation in God, the eternal, necessary and infinite First Cause, implies eternal, necessary and infinite Evil : and it remains for anyone to say who can, how there could be any good in human beings. Moreover, God would have impossibly deprived Himself before He was, and before Eternity, which had no beginning. It follows then that He is eternally, necessarily and infinitely Good : but how can we reconcile that with leaving us to our fate, or with giving us no certain means of knowing what He requires from us? He might, indeed, have not caused the human race to be : but to make us what we are, and then treat us as if we were irrational creatures, incapable of aspiring and ignorant of our own end, or to give us a future life of reward or punishment without any certain means of knowing what we ought to believe or do—is that what we should expect from the eternally, necessarily and infinitely Good?"

"No, it is not," said the Pearl.

"Then," said Oswald, "we must conclude that there is a visible Church, with a visible Head and a delegated authority,—seeing that God is not visibly present. The existence of other religions, especially those that are called

Christian, is often put forward as an argument against the existence of a One True Church ; and with many people it passes for reasoning. They might as well say that where there are several claimants to a property there is no rightful owner of it."

"Or," said the Pearl, "that, when an event is variously described, it never happened."

"Just so," he said. "And now we have been over the ground again, for the sake of clearness and continuity ; and have come to the point where we left off. It remains for us to find this One True Church ; and since we cannot find anything, unless we know what we are looking for, we had better ask ourselves first what we are expecting to find. We might be very long over this without any practical gain to you at this time, when you are simply seeking the Church of God, for you will see, I think, that the practical question before us lies in a nutshell. Five things occur at once, as essential to the Church of God, viz., an evident unity of doctrine, because Truth is always one and therefore exclusive ; secondly, an evident continuity from the beginning, because, without that, it would include contradictions of itself and therefore not be true ; thirdly, an evident holiness distinctly its own, as being the Church of the infinitely Good ; fourthly, Universality ; fifthly, an apostolic character. I have little time to be strangely here in—"

The Pearl shivered, and said, "Go on."

"I have little time," he repeated, "to be strangely here in—and I had better not waste it in proving the doctrinal unity of the Catholic Church, because her enemies admit it by twitting us with it as a proof of our not being large-minded. So we had better pass on to her continuity."

"In the Book of Genesis, the oldest of historical records, we find a direct Theocracy, tempered by nothing but disobedience. In the Book of Exodus, we find that God gave a code of laws and spoke to Moses. Later on we find the Prophets declaring the Will of God, and the High Priests learning the Divine Will by means of Urim and Thummim. Josephus, writing for a pagan emperor of Rome, tells the same story. In the New Testament we find this continuity emphasized by the most stupendous increase of God's loving protection ; the result of which has been that in

every quarter of the globe His Church is, and at every moment of time the Holy Sacrifice is offered."

The Pearl listened with rapt attention, her eyes fixed upon his face.

"Thirdly, as to the holiness of the Catholic Church, her adversaries bear witness to that by depreciating her for being so. Don't they (for instance) depreciate (to use the mildest words) her councils and her saints and her nuns, and everything that distinctly marks her?"

"They do," said the Pearl.

"Fourthly," said he, "we should expect it to be universal, because otherwise God would have incredibly restricted it to certain nations or localities. Furthermore and fifthly, we should expect it to be apostolic, because the Apostles were the first members of it and (so to speak) planted it; and we should expect it to have a visible Head, the successor of St. Peter, to whom Our Lord committed the headship of it in the plainest words. Now as a fact it *is* universal, not national. It is apostolic, as anyone may see in the direct succession of the Popes and Bishops from St. Peter, up to its visible Head, the successor of St. Peter; and in the lives of its missionaries, and in the teaching of its Catechisms. Can you find these marks outside the Catholic Church?"

"No, I cannot," said the Pearl, "nor can it be found. You have convinced me. I believe that that there is a visible Church, and that it is the Catholic Church."

"Thanks be to God," said Oswald, rising from his chair. "By His help I have done what I came to do, and I have no further reason for remaining here. I came for that, and apart from that I am in a false position before you. I have only to say that you are now bound in conscience to act upon it, as your father did. In that case my uncle will do the rest for you, as he did for your father. He is the nearest Priest, and you know him, and your father received the last sacraments from him. If you persevere, as I hope and pray and believe that you will, Hunterscombe, with its chapel, will be the most convenient place; and if any difficulty should arise about your being here, I will be near to protect you till you are mistress of your own."

He left the room and the house, and then walked across the hill to Hunterscombe, praying for help or resignation.

The Pearl said nothing when he went, but Monica, coming in, found her on the floor, senseless.

She recovered quickly, staggered up and said, "How very odd, to stumble in that way."

"You didn't stumble," said Monica; "and you mustn't go on like that. I see it all in a way, now that I see enough to make me think of it all and remember it all. You mustn't go on so, or you will repent it all your life."

These wise and well-timed words impressed the Pearl deeply: but how, she thought, can I follow her advice without clearing up that essential question? And how can I clear it unless somebody were to ask *him*? And how could anyone do so unless I were to open the question—and how can I open such a question as that, and who is there that I could speak to about it?"

They were miserably silenced by each other against the will of each, and there seemed no apparent way of escape from the strange position in which they were, relatively to each other.

It was past mid-day when Oswald left the cottage—and before an hour had passed the Pearl wrote to Father Bramsby, asking him to come to her as soon as possible. She sent the note by Monica, and thought over the close reasoning that she had grasped.

"Yes, I did—I do understand it," she said to herself. "Strange it was that I could: for it was quite new to me, and I know so little. I suppose that trouble has taught me. And then it is all so very beautiful."

Father Bramsby, in answer to the pressing note, set out at three o'clock for Humbleton-in-the-Hole.

"Trouble has taught her," he said to himself. "The devil has done his worst, and been worsted. The very trials that he made use of to deceive her have developed her mind and strengthened her character."



CHAPTER XLVIII.



HE Pearl, having shown exceptional intelligence of the more difficult, was not likely to be obtuse about the less: and in fact she did her own part so well that she was sufficiently instructed within a fortnight. After that Father Bramsby seldom came, but left her to finish the instruction herself with the help of books, till the remaining weeks of her minority should have expired.

"As things are," said he, at the end of his last visit, "it is more prudent that you should not come to Hunterscombe until the first week in September. But I am sure that you will utilise the time, and be ready then to be received into the Church."

And she did utilise the time. So did the Baroness Diabolouski, in spite of Twerleby's unwillingness to be shown as the owner of Maplethorpe. She had caused Mr. Oldchurch and all the neighbours to call on them in a welcoming manner, dined out three times and given a successful dinner party. In fact she had accomplished, as she told herself, all, and more than all, that she originally intended to do in that way. She had not only settled herself in Ilsetshire and kept out the General Foreigner, but also settled herself at Maplethorpe in spite of its being inherited by an heiress. True it is that she hated and despised her husband, but she had married him under those conditions, deliberately, and accepted them in deliberate preference to accepting the Grace of God, which, in fact, she had finally rejected at Hunterscombe, when she made her conditional submission depend on the desperate hope

of stealing Oswald from the Pearl ; so as to be reconciled to the Church by marrying a very attractive man and settling herself at Hunterscombe. This, in plain English, was an attempt at seeking reconciliation by the impossible process of making a bargain with Almighty God. It condemned itself to fail, and sank her in a lower depth of impenitence.

Twereleby felt ashamed and fearful. The twice-lost codicil was like the sword of Damocles. He was always expecting it to come down on him. Had it been lost only once, the fear would not have been so great, but this dreadful document had been twice lost—lost by him and lost by her, lost by each and both. Superstition, crouching by the side of dead faith, filled him with such terror that at last his terrible wife said to him :

“Let me hear no more about that. I burnt it. But mind ! it must not be known.”

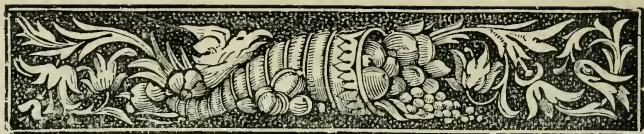
He said no more, because he had nothing to say ; and so they flourished like a green bay tree, with the approval of all the neighbours except Mr. Blastmore and Sir Henry Melford. Mr. Blastmore, whilst carefully keeping the secret of the Pearl’s rescue, affirmed openly that he “hated the lot.” Sir Henry expressed the same thing in other words to himself, but he dined at Maplethorpe and made himself agreeable to the Baroness ; while Charlotte Amelia, now Lady Melford, was most affectionate and confidential, not knowing that the Baroness had tried to win him away from her, while staying at Blumbury as her friend. Sir Henry disliked the whole proceeding, but he floated on the surface of the stream, shrugging his shoulders when no one saw him. The reason why he did so, is not far to seek. He knew too much of the Catholic Church to be honestly out of it ; and therefore, since he would not be in it, how could he honestly be where he was ? It only remained for him to look away from the grave side of everything, and pleasantly make the best of whatever was pleasantly present.

Lady RosSDen continually disliked her nephew’s marriage, and often told herself in private that the Baroness was a nasty, sly, ungrateful thing ; but she came to Maplethorpe on a long visit, as a sort of security to the neighbourhood for the past good behaviour of each and both in relation to the Pearl. When she asked after the codicil, the Baroness asked her advice about it—which only puzzled her ; and

Augustus Twerleby, telling a lie in fear of his terrible wife, knew nothing about it.

Thus the disunited pair were flourishing like a green bay tree, when on the second of September the Pearl began to leave Humbleton-in-the-Hole.





CHAPTER XLIX.



HUMBLETON-IN-THE-HOLE, though a small village, was a great fact in the Pearl's life. Riding with her father, she had read its name on a finger-post, when, by losing their way, they found Hunterscombe; and after eight months and a half, she had come there, as a wandering exile, to find her way into the Church of God. The name of Old Sleetham, also, was on the finger-post, and the name of Dripstone Shelford, whose clock had struck eleven just before the perilous rescue. By losing their way on those hills, she and her father had made the acquaintance of Father Bramsby, who afterwards received him into the Church, and now was going to receive her.

On the previous day, that is on the first of September, 1890,—the Pearl being expected at Hunterscombe on the second—Fetherhed and his wife arrived there on a nuptial visit, and Father Bramsby utilized the fact by explaining to them why the Pearl's luggage had better not be brought there so soon, and also why she and Monica should not be seen at Hunterscombe in the same clothes as those worn at Old Sleetham and Humbleton-in-the-Hole. Mrs. Fetherhed, therefore, drove to Backwater with her husband after breakfast on the second, bringing back, for the Pearl and Monica, certain changes of clothes and other things required, so that the Pearl's luggage would remain out of sight, in the care of Monica's mother, until after the twenty-first birthday. Meanwhile the Pearl herself, accompanied by the faithful Monica, was to await at Hunterscombe the hour of her freedom.

At half past five she was ready to start on her walk over the hills. She sent for Monica's mother, grasped her hand affectionately, and said :

"Good-bye, and thank you for all your kindness. You must come and see me at Maplethorpe."

"God bless you, Ma'am," said Monica's mother ; "may you have a happy First Communion, and a happy life afterwards, and a happy death at the end of it. I shall always pray for you."

"What beautiful words !" thought the Pearl, drawing down her veil and walking away. "How much one may learn from them and from her ! A happy First Communion will depend on my own dispositions, which, I hope and believe, are good in their imperfect way, by the infinite goodness of God, Who gives the required grace and accepts a very imperfect return, if only our will is right. A happy death, too, in my own power : if I fail to have that, it will be my own fault simply. But to have a happy life is not in my power ; and I don't deserve it. I ought not to have believed anything against him."

She had thought these last words aloud, believing that Monica, who was a little way behind her on the hill, would not hear them. But Monica, whose ears were always very sharp in a good cause, did hear, and, coming alongside of her, said :

"You mustn't, my dear young lady, get into scrupulosity. It wasn't your fault at all. They were all telling a pack of lies, on purpose to keep him away."

"Yes, and they did," thought the Pearl. "And I believed them. But he came afterwards till he had led me up to the threshold of the Catholic Church, the Church of God. He did that, and when he had finished, he bade me farewell for ever. His words had no other meaning. And I let him go, and never said one word. I can see it, now that it is too late—too late."

"But you must not let it end so," said Monica. "You mustn't indeed." And she added to herself, "I will speak to the young Squire, myself that I will, if it goes on so much longer. I shall tell him that I found her on the floor in a faint, and if that doesn't show him what's what, he won't be the young Squire."

"How far," said the Pearl, after they had gone a little

way on, "is Hunterscombe from Humbleton-in-the-Hole?"

"About two miles, this way," said Monica. "We shall pass by the Home Farm and through a bit of the wood that lies behind the house."

By that way they reached Hunterscombe at a quarter to six, as Monica had arranged—the Pearl closely veiled, Monica wigged and spectacled. Father Bramsby was on the bridge to receive them.

"Welcome here," he said. "Most welcome in every way and for every reason. You will not be molested now. The time is too short. But you might have some annoyance, perhaps, if your whereabouts were discovered. So we had better be cautious. I will see to that. The old butler and housekeeper alone know who you are; and they are thoroughly to be trusted. In fact, one might trust them all; but it is better so, in case of accidents or cross-questioning."

"Everyone here is to be trusted," said the Pearl, as they went into the house.

"I trust myself to kick out any fellow that comes to bother," said Mr. Blastmore, striding up to the door. "I hope you are pretty well, in spite of it all."

"I am much the better," said she, "for having the pleasure of seeing you again, and thanking you for—"

"It wasn't I," interposed Mr. Blastmore. "I only knocked the revolver out of the blackguard's hands, and hid him afterwards."

"The hiding," said Father Bramsby, "was portentous. I heard it going on after the carriage had turned the corner of the road."

"Well, I *did* give him 'what for,'" said Mr. Blastmore, "and a real comfort it was. It quite did me good. But Oswald Bramsby ran all the risk. It's a wonder that he wasn't killed. That chap had to pay for all, but, mark my words, the other two were in it. And there they are, swaggering away at Maplethorpe. They'll look very 'old' when they have to turn out. Did you ever hear about the letter that tumbled out of Lady Rossden's pocket at Cubton? No, I suppose not, driven about as you have been. It's the greatest joke. It was from that Baroness. But saving your presence, as the saying goes, that cousin of yours is, in his own way, as bad as the other two."

They were then in the hall, and Fetherhed and his wife came in from a walk.

Said Father Bramsby, presently, addressing Mr. Fetherhed: "I have to apologize for Oswald—or more correctly to express his great regret at being unavoidably absent on this your first visit to Hunterscombe as bridegroom and bride. He was summoned to London two hours ago by a telegram about some trustee business, connected with the lawyers' firm to which he belonged. It appears that someone died suddenly and left his affairs in a muddle. But I hope he will be liberated in a few days."

They talked for a while, and then the Pearl went upstairs. Father Bramsby had turned himself out of his own room and given it to her, because within it there was the secret room or hiding hole already described, and also a narrow staircase leading down from a water-gate to a foot-bridge across the moat, by which the Pearl could walk in the garden, whenever she pleased, without going through the front gateway.

"This," he said, showing her the room, "is an absurd precaution; but, in such a case, I had rather sin by excess than by defect."

He turned away, and the Pearl went into the room, thinking much. Mr. Blastmore had unconsciously confirmed all that Monica had said while walking from Humbleton-in-the-Hole, and without knowing that any advice was needed, emphasized hers.

When they met in the drawing-room before dinner, the emphasized advice was deeply impressed on the Pearl's mind, but she had no chance of even trying to utilize it, for Oswald was not there.

"Oswald," said Father Bramsby, "hopes to be back for your First Communion."

"That's a wonderful day," said Mrs. Fetherhed. "It really is the greatest day of one's life."

"Yes, except the day of one's death," said the Pearl; "that is, if it is the beginning of the true life,—if one dies with the hope of passing through purgative pain to the Beatific Vision."

"That's it," said Mr. Blastmore. "It's all of no use without that. But the day of one's First Communion is an awfully big thing."

"Dinner is on the table," said the butler, opening the door as widely as possible.

While they were dining and agreeably talking—though the Pearl told herself that Oswald would only come for her First Communion, and be away afterwards till she had gone,—Twerleby and his terrible wife (Lady Rossden being absent) were dining dually at Maplethorpe, and quarrelling over the codicil.

"It can't have been burnt," said he.

"It could," said she, "because it *was* burnt. *Ab esse ad posse valet illatio*," as the scholastics would say. *Nous avons changé tout cela*, but we can't deny that axiom."

"D—n the axiom," said he, being nearly drunk, quite against the habits of his whole life till then. "I say that it wasn't burnt. I don't believe you ever had it. You tricked me into a hateful marriage by saying that you had that codicil. I hate you—hate the sight of you, and I mean to be off somewhere. I don't care a d—n what happens to me, after all that I have done and don't repent of, and won't repent of; but I hate *you*, and I won't have anything more to do with you. You may go to the devil, as I shall; but I won't stand it any longer."

"You are drunk," she said, standing up and fixing her eyes on his. "You are filthily drunk and swagger drunkenly. I will talk about that in the morning when you are sober. Go to bed, you beast; and don't venture to appear before me till you are in a fit state for me to see you."

"I am not drunk," said Twerleby, rising to go. "I never was drunk and never will be. If I have drunk more wine than I ever drank before, I did so to drown the remorse and shame that you brought on me by your hideous and murderous plot—yes, murderous. If she were alive, she certainly would have written. She was murdered. I *did* see her standing on the beach at Old Sleetham. She was murdered by that low and sneaking savage, your friend, into whose power you entrapped her."

"I don't know," said the Baroness, "what your definition of being drunk may happen to be; but you have drunk too much, and your way of speaking shows it. You are neither mad nor a fool; and therefore you must be drunk to suppose that Margaret would write so soon, after such a —"

"How about telegraphing?" interrupted Twerleby. "I don't believe that she did. *You* sent it, to deceive my aunt and me. *You did*. *You can't* say that you didn't."

At these uncomfortable words the Baroness began to go, somewhat in haste, but saving her dignity.

"How could I," said she, "have telegraphed from Folkestone, when you know that I was travelling from here to London?"

"You left here at night," said he, "and came to us after eleven the next morning. You could not be twelve hours coming."

"You know," said she, "how that happened."

"I don't," said he, "and I don't believe a word of it."

Here he began to follow her, repeating the words, "You can't deny it;" but she, opening the door quickly, swung it with such force at him advancing, that it bumped against his head with a loud noise, causing him to see lights that were not. Under cover of this the Baroness made good her escape from the uncomfortable words, and promised herself to pay him off in the morning.

"I am in his power," she thought, "but he is in mine, and he is the most vulnerable one. If we separate so, he must give me an allowance, as his wife; but he would be disgraced, cut by everyone, morally driven out. To-morrow I shall clearly explain all that. Of course he was not drunk, but wine and remorse had excited him. He shall hear in the morning what I mean. He must know, once for all, what I am, and why, and why he must go on like me and with me, or be ruined in the only life that he can hope to enjoy."

Twerleby, cowed by his own conscience and ashamed without contrition, went upstairs, turned into the nearest bedroom, and grovelled on the ground, longing to kill himself, but fearing to die; obstinately unrepentant, but gnawed by remorse for the imaginary murder of the Pearl.

Who, safe at Hunterscombe was telling her adventures while the second course was being put on the table.

". . . But the Baroness Diabolouski's visit," she said, "would have been amusing afterwards, if the whole story were not so horrible. It was as good as a farce. Monica placed me and a jug full of water close to the open window, where I could hear what was said; and after a great deal

of mumbling talk, with a pebble in her mouth, she suddenly said, 'You must mind, Mum, how you stand there; for she's as likely as not to empty the water jug all over you.' That was the signal, and I did empty the water jug all over her. I am rather ashamed of it, but necessity has no law. I had to play the part of a troublesome and rather dangerous lunatic."

"Did she swear?" said Fetherhed.

"Not audibly," said the Pearl, "but her face expressed swearing. Monica frightened her out of the village by threatening to have her taken up for trying to extort money, and then took away her fly. The end of it was that we went in her fly to Humbleton-in-the-Hole, and left her walking to Backwater."

"Well done, Monica!" said Mr. Blastmore. "She's a brick."

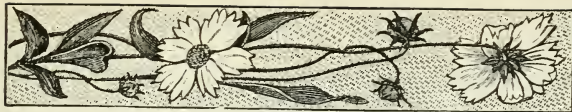
"She is truly good," said Father Bramsby, "good all round, and full of the wisdom that we always find, more or less, in those who serve us faithfully because they serve God first. That was the reason why I recommended her to you."

"And for that," said the Pearl, "besides all the rest that you have done for me (which is immeasurable), I never can thank you enough. What she has been to me, I cannot express without taking up the whole conversation till midnight; nor can I express the reverence that I feel for a truly faithful servant, such as Monica is. It seems to me one of the noblest, most unselfish offices in the world."

"It is so indeed," said Father Bramsby, "for it means habitual practice of Christian virtues."

"But for her," said the Pearl, "I should not be alive now. Once on board that vessel, I should never have had the chance of telling the tale. It was a most awfully narrow escape."

One question led on to another, till the Pearl had to relate the whole story. This, with remarks and comments, took up the whole evening till the bell rang for night prayers. All prayed for the Pearl, who was to be received into the Church before Mass on the following day. Mr. Blastmore's responses rang through the chapel.



CHAPTER LXX.

WHAT WAS DONE IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS.



IN the morning, a little before eight o'clock, all had assembled in the chapel, and the Pearl received conditional Baptism. She remained there till the bell rang for breakfast, and then, by Father Bramsby's advice, breakfasted in her own room, lest the Baroness Diabolouski should happen to explore, and, hidden by a shrub, see her through some convenient open window of the dining-room from the other side of the moat.

After breakfast the Pearl wrote two letters: one was to her father's lawyer, asking him to come to Hunterscombe on the 13th, and to bring with him the necessary papers relating to her coming of age—meantime to keep her residence at Hunterscombe a profound secret, for reasons which she would explain on his arrival. The other was to the Catholic Bishop of the Diocese, a short note for Father Bramsby to enclose in one of his own, explaining the difficulties of her position and asking for confirmation.

On the 8th of September, the feast of our Blessed Lady's Nativity, the Pearl was to receive her First Communion. Shortly before Mass, Oswald came into the chapel, knelt down near the door, and immediately after Mass went away. The Pearl never saw him; but Mr. Fetherhed did. Four days afterwards, the Bishop, coming to Hunterscombe and finding her thoroughly prepared, confirmed her.

While the Bishop was there, arrangements were made for restoring the long disused chapel at Maplethorpe. This, apart from the restoration and all that it involved, would benefit many. Maplethorpe was far from the nearest Catholic Church, Cubton was further, and there were a few outlying Catholics at Grumley Green. He left Hunterscombe on the evening of the 13th, well pleased with the Pearl. About two hours afterwards, the lawyer arrived.

On the morning of the 14th, the Pearl rose early and spent a long time in prayer, asking Almighty God that help might be given her to bear and use well the heavy responsibilities which the next day would bring. Then she went down to the chapel, received Holy Communion, and after a while returned to her room.

The rays of the morning sun shone brightly in, lighting up the old tapestry hangings, glistening on the polished oak wainscoting, and, reflected by the rippling waters of the moat, danced in interlacing circles on the ceiling. Then, as her eye fell on the panelling, she remembered the hiding-hole above, quite forgotten before, and she longed to explore it. She pushed the library steps close to the wall, mounted them, pushed up the panel and clambered into the curious place that she had seen from below, nine months before. It was dimly lighted from an air hole in the roof. There was nothing to be seen in it, except a wooden stool placed against the opposite wall. She looked at the bench, thought of the hunted Priest who had sat on it, and, impelled by an irresistible curiosity, for which there was no apparent cause, dragged it forward. Then she saw, imbedded in the rough panelling that covered the wall, an iron ring, which the bench had concealed.

She pulled the ring, and the panel opened upwards, disclosing a narrow hole in the wall, that contained, far in, a bundle of dusty manuscripts tied with faded blue silk.

"Well, I never!" said Monica, who had brought the Pearl's breakfast into the room below, and peeped upwards.

"This is an old hiding hole," said the Pearl, "and I found this hidden up."

"Well, to be sure!" said Monica. "I've heard talk of these things, and read about them. Who knows what you may find?"

The Pearl replaced the papers, closed the panel, pushed back the bench and came down into the room.

"There might be a something," said Monica, "and who has a better right to see what it is than you?"

Having delivered this opinion, knowing why she said so and rejoicing thereat, Monica went away. The Pearl breakfasted, and soon afterwards went into the Hall, where she found Father Bramsby. "You must come," she said, "and see what I have discovered. Or perhaps you know of it?"

They went up, and she pulled the bench away from the wall, saying, "This is how I found it out. The bench hid it. If you will pull that ring you will see."

"This is quite new to me," said Father Bramsby, opening the panel and taking out the time-worn roll.

"These," he said, "will, no doubt, be interesting, as records of the time—put carefully away in hiding, that the Pursuivants might not find them. And now I must be off to Backwater to make arrangements for to-morrow. The landlord at the George will be able to get the carriage you wish for, and I have told the housekeeper to put up a good basket of provisions, that you may have a picnic luncheon on the road. The posters will be here this evening to put up, for Maplethorpe is nineteen or twenty-one miles from here. You ought to start about eleven."

While the Pearl was preparing to take possession of her own, the remorsefully unrepentant usurper was quarrelling with his hated wife about her. The quarrel was short but sharp.

"I won't take my uncle's name," said Twerleby. "I hate the whole thing. You have disgraced me—"

"You have disgraced yourself," said the Baroness. "Could there be anything more abominable than your attempt at deceiving a helpless girl into a false marriage by every sort of false pretence? or anything more contemptible than the manner in which you sneaked away?"

"Didn't you," said Twerleby, "teach me to look on all moral principles as but relatively true?"

"No, I did not."

"Yes, you did: and now I can't live here—"

"You *must* live here, or everything will be believed against you. And you *must* make yourself agreeable to-morrow at the luncheon party, instead of looking

ashamed of yourself, as you did the other evening ; and you must, as your uncle's will directs, take his name."

"I won't, I can't. What proof have I that I am the lawful possessor of this property?"

"Proof? Why, you yourself, over and over again in the last two months and a half, have been told by her bankers that she has not drawn money, though she went away without any."

"Yes, I have; and it only proves that she was murdered."

"It doesn't."

"I tell you that it does, and you know that it does, and don't care."

"Care? How can I care for that, after rebelling against God, defying Him, casting in my lot with the fallen angels and the damned, as you have done, and are doing, *and will do*? You know why we are married, and how we, of course, hate each other, and how we have to live, making the best of this hideous world, for which we have pridefully, finally and with full consent, renounced all hope of the Beatific Vision. I am a desperate woman, which means, as you know, that I am more dangerous than any man. You will do as I tell you; or I will proclaim before the world all the evil deeds that you have done in the last year. Choose which you please. Your behaviour to-morrow at the luncheon party will decide which it is to be."

So ended the short but sharp quarrel to the discomfiture of Twerleby.

This conversation took place after dinner, when the servants had gone. About the same time, the Pearl, in the old drawing-room at Hunterscombe, was told that some one wanted to see her. Going into the great hall, accompanied by Father Bramsby and the lawyer, she found Suprême, who had just arrived from Maplethorpe. Suprême, holding in his hand a paper parcel, advanced and bowed profoundly.

"I am so glad to see you again," said the Pearl, "and to thank you. But I never can thank you enough. Without you, Monica would not have been able to save me, as she did, by going to Hunterscombe."

"I have not done other things," said Suprême, "than it was my duty to Miladi, and that was to run for to tell

Monica what I had heard. But I think that these little packets what I have brought shall be something. When Monica had departed that evening from Maplethorpe to come here, and I not know nothing, I said to myself, 'Where shall that codicil be, that was stolen from Miladi and walked away without legs? I should make a little *perquisition* for it, while there is not but the servants here. But while I was thinking about it that night, and asking myself where I should make the perquisition, the Baroness came back, and when she had screamed that you, Miladi, was lost, and when she had sent the servants to run everywhere, she sent for me, and she say to me: 'It must that I go now to London and tell all to Lady Rossden. I have packed my clothes in the valise and the trunk, but the lock is so stiff,—and all the men are out looking for the poor young lady. Will you have the *complaisance*,' she say to me, 'to lock it for me, and to carry them to the carriage?' I say to her, 'With pleasure, Madame la Baronne,' and I flied up the stairs with her. I tried to lock the valise, but it was so full the iron loop would not go into the hole. 'Could you take a little something out, Madame?' I say to her, and she stooped down to do it, and already I had peeped, and I had seen in a drawer which stood open, a something that made me to think—a long blue letter with the name of *Monsieur Auguste* on it. I said to myself, 'That shall be the codicil.' So while she was stooping down with her back to me, to put some things better into the valise for to make it shut, I posed myself with my face to her and my back close to the drawer, and with my hand behind me I picked the big letter from the drawer, and slipped it into my pocket. Then I went and made the valise to lock, while she held it, and then I said to her, 'Madame, these clocks are slow—there is not much time for the train, and already the coachman waits below with the brougham. If you will take down the little seal-skin bag and the *entoutcas*, I can bring both the valise and the little trunk myself after.' So she came all in haste and locked the drawer, and put the key in her pocket. But already I had *this* in *my* pocket for Miladi."

So saying he gave the packet he held in his hand to the Pearl with another profound bow.

"How can I ever thank you enough?" she said. "Yes, this is the codicil."

"But, Miladi," said Suprême, "there is this also. When Miladi Rossden was at Paris, and her maid had gone to her, she did send to me the key of her *écritoire* to get her cheque book of the English bank for to send some money to the *gens* of Miladi at Backwater, and she told me the drawer where to find it. And when I took the cheque book, I did see under it a letter addressed, Miladi, to you; Monica had told me that she had tried to make a perquisition for one that you had lost, and I say to myself, 'This perhaps shall be the one.' I did not write of it to Miladi Rossden, for I not know what to do until that I should say to you how I saw it."

With these words he put a smaller packet into her hand. It was her father's lost letter. The Pearl took it, and, glancing at it, said, "Thank you for ever. You can hardly know, even you, what this is to me."

Suprême bowed profoundly, and said, "Miladi, it is but my duty, but also my happiness."

"I never *can* thank you enough," said the Pearl, and she was going to say more, but Suprême had disappeared.

"That man," said Father Bramsby, "is worthy of Monica, which is a very big thing to say."

"He is," said the Pearl, "and he has been devoted to her for so long. But nothing would induce her to leave me. Of course when they marry, and they must do so soon now, they shall never leave Maplethorpe."

They returned to the drawing-room, and when they had sat down the lawyer said :

"This codicil refers to some instructions contained in a letter to you that accompanies it. Here is the letter, inside the envelope. You had better see what it says. I can see by the handwriting that he wrote the codicil himself, and only a day or two before his lamented death."

By the codicil Malmains revoked his former will, leaving all his personalty to his daughter absolutely, together with some distant land not belonging to the Maplethorpe estate. Maplethorpe itself, with all the lands thereto belonging, he left in trust, in the names of three trustees, his daughter Margaret Malmains, Father Bramsby, and Sir Henry Melford, for the purposes mentioned in the secret instructions which were given in a letter appended to the codicil; but the trust was to cease and determine as

soon as she had attained the age of twenty-five, when the whole of the estate was to be hers absolutely, unless disposed of before, according to the terms of the trust.

"This is quite unlike him," said the lawyer, "but no doubt the instructions in the letter to his daughter will explain it."

The Pearl took the letter and read aloud as follows :—

My dearest Child,

Having been looking into several papers in this house, I came on a copy of a letter from your maternal great-grand-mother to a school friend of hers, referring to a strange appearance sometimes seen at Briansford, and the usurpation of this property in the days of persecution by the nephew of the rightful owner. The said nephew was reproached by an inhabitant of the village, an old woman who had been his nurse, for doing away with the Holy Sacrifice and seizing the property from its rightful owner. Meeting him on the hill above the ford, she foretold that he would have a violent death, and that no male heir should ever be born to him or his at Maplethorpe. He struck at the old woman with his riding-whip, being a man of violent temper. The blow missed her, but hit his horse, who galloped furiously down the hill, threw him off as it rushed through the ford, and broke his neck. This is the story of the Ban of Maplethorpe. A funeral procession is said to be seen at Briansford before the death of the owner of Maplethorpe ; and of this I have heard some vague accounts, though your dear mother would never have it mentioned. You will find the details and particulars of the appearances in the oak cabinet in the library ; and the undoubted fact remains that since then there has been no male heir.

Having had the inestimable blessing of being brought into the Church of God, I wish to do what I can towards repairing the wrong, and removing the Ban. If I live, I shall try my best to find in England or elsewhere a lineal descendant of the dispossessed Malmaines, if there is one. If I can find him, and ascertain that he is a true Catholic, practising his religion, I shall give up to him this house and estate of Maplethorpe, thereby removing the Ban from me and mine. If I find after full investigation that no such heir exists, I shall found a

religious house for monks, by which means I hope and pray that God in His mercy will remove from me and mine the guilt of that sin. If I should die without carrying out my intention, I ask you, my dearest daughter and only and beloved child, to do it for me; and for this purpose I have associated with you in the trust Father Bramsby, my dearest friend, a man of singular intuition, and Sir Henry Melford, an old and trusted friend of mine, in whose chivalrous honour I can confide, who is besides a man of the world, having many acquaintances in England and abroad, and therefore will be able to help you in tracing the lawful descendant, if any such exist. Should this quest be without any result before you are twenty-five years of age, I release you from all obligations under this my codicil, desiring the trust to cease, and you to possess all the lands, house, manors, buildings and lands of Maplethorpe absolutely, as my sole heir.

"This makes it quite clear," said the Pearl, "and just as I should have willed myself, if I had known what he knew and what I know now."

"And yet," said the lawyer, "I know how immensely you love the beautiful old place—to my mind, one of the ideal old Elizabethan houses in England."

"I do love it," she said, "but not so as to keep it at the cost of injustice."

"Her father's daughter," said the lawyer to Father Bramsby. "A true heroine, I cannot express how much I respect and reverence a character like that."

"It is my duty and nothing more," said the Pearl, "though I thank you for your kindness. And now, I will say good-night, for we have a long day before us to-morrow."

She went to her room, and said to herself, "Now I will read my father's dear letter. How terribly I have longed, without hope, to know those last words of his! But God is so good to me. I have them at last."

The letter was long and most interesting, detailing his conversion, and giving in clear language the arguments and reasons that he had found convincing. It concluded by entreating her to examine the question and follow the light that God would certainly give in answer to prayer. At the end were these words, in a postscript: "Oswald Bramsby has just left me. I never will try to influence you

against your inclination in a question of marriage—no, never; I only say that, if you should, by your own free choice, accept *him*, this your choice would be in exact agreement with my judgment of him.”

“Free choice?” said the Pearl. “I was always one with him. Too late—too late, and by my own fault, my own miserable fault. And my cousin told me—that *he*—. How could I—even for an hour—have been deceived by such a lie? It was all my own fault. I ought to have known—and now it is too late.”





CHAPTER LXXI.



AT daybreak on the fifteenth, Twerleby woke with a start. Besides his unrepentant remorse, his miserable marriage and his loss of the codicil, he was tormented by fear of shame. Had he not married in haste the Baroness Diabolouski, who was walking with the Pearl when the latter disappeared? Was it not probable that the manner of the disappearance would ooze out, and her share in it be known, and his hurried marriage with her be interpreted as proof of complicity? Moreover, had he not taken possession of Maplethorpe without being sure that it was his? The Pearl would not have married the General Foreigner—of that he was quite certain. Therefore she must either be dead—murdered by that man—or somehow in a position to claim her property. “And this,” he muttered, “is the fifteenth. Why was I such a fool as to come here before she came of age?”

He rushed out of bed, and within ten minutes was in the park, saying to himself, “Perhaps I shall get a letter by this post from her, or from the lawyer, and then have to face all the seventeen people who are coming to luncheon! Curse on the woman who—”

And yet was he not at least as bad, without her miserable excuses, such as they were? Had he not made the plot his own, by consenting to it with full knowledge of her? Had he not previously deceived his own dying uncle, and endeavoured to deceive that uncle’s only child—a minor,

to whom he was guardian? Yes, he had; and if he felt a sort of unrepentant remorse, conscience compelling, so did she.

At last, finding that neither the fresh air nor the rising sun gave him any relief, he went in, took out his long interrupted article on the "Progressive Relativity of Truth," and began to write.

"We," he began, "are the measure of truth to ourselves by our acceptance of it as true." Here he paused, remembering optical delusions, false witness, and the impossibility of truth and falsehood being one, as they must be, if the same thing could be true by the assent of A, and false by the dissent of B; or true formerly by their assent, and false now by their dissent. But then the doctrine was so convenient: for if he could show to himself that he had not deceived the Pearl and her father, true it would be that he had not deceived them.

Three hours had passed and more without any notable progress, when the bell rang for breakfast. He hurried into the dining-room and tore open his letters. There was no letter from the Pearl, nor from her lawyer.

"What were you expecting?" said the Baroness.

"Don't you know," said he, "that Margaret comes of age to-day?"

"Do you mean that you expected her to claim it?"

"Why not," said he, "unless she was murdered by that scoundrel?"

"You mustn't talk about scoundrels, you know," said she. "Remember yourself. But do you suppose that he would lose the chance of profiting by her money, when she was in such a position that he could morally compel her to marry him? How could she claim an estate that she had given up?"

"Given up? How do you know that she did give it up?"

"She practically gave it up by marrying him, and consented to give it up by knowing the terms of her father's will, *for I suppose you told her of that clause.*"

Twerleby disappeared, regardless of his breakfast, and retired for the purpose of considering how he might comfortably be the measure of truth to himself.

The Baroness Diabolouski finished her breakfast (Lady

Rossden breakfasting in her own room), walked in the Park pensively, returned slowly, dressed carefully, and reviewing her thoughts, awaited the arrival of the guests.

These included old Bundleton, Sir Henry Melford and Charlotte Amelia, the Dean with his wife and daughter, Mr. Oldchurch, and the Rector of Humbleton-in-the-Hole with his wife and daughter—the latter came from Blumbury, where they were on a short visit. There were also Lord and Lady Weybridge and their daughter married to a county member; all of whom Oswald had met there at dinner many months before. Besides there were Lord and Lady Foxmore, whose property was half way between Maplethorpe and Hunterscombe, and a son who had just passed his examination for the army; also the curate of Grumley Green, and Archdeacon Maniple, who agreed with Mr. Oldchurch about continuity, but disagreed with him as to what the thing continued was. The Archdeacon opined that what is called Ritualism by the profane had somehow always been, from the time of St. Augustine to the time of Dr. Benson, who supposes himself to sit in the saint's chair; while Mr. Oldchurch considered it to be an essential Catholicity, much embracing, and in England always distinguishable from the peculiar characteristics that Romanism and Dissent have, at times, impressed on the surface.

They discussed this in a corner before luncheon, the cue being given by Lady Rossden, to show off the wisdom of her favourite authority, Mr. Oldchurch. The Dean, who was near, agreed with both to a certain extent, while old Bundleton waddled up and affirmed the "eight hundred years and more of abominable idolatry," while the Curate, not wishing to offend anyone, went to the other side of the room. The Rector of Humbleton-in-the-Hole, who cared for none of these things, kept out of the way, and conversed with Lord Foxmore about a Hereford bull belonging to the former.

But the Baroness Diabolouski would not allow five men to spoil her party by talking together, while eight ladies were in the room. She broke up the congestion of men, and caused each to be talking to some lady, so that when all went in to luncheon, every one talked and agreed. The Baroness herself was radiant, and by her extremely agreeable

conversation, which communicated itself more or less to the others, forced her unwilling husband out of his sullen silence.

"Where they do agree, their unanimity is wonderful." There is more truth in these words than appears at first sight. Whenever you can *establish* unanimity in a given number of human beings, the result will always be remarkably good in its kind, because evil is destructive of unanimity, and unanimity implies at least the absence of that inclination to quarrel which was first shown by Cain. The Baroness Diabolouski, as she was, cared not for its moral advantages, but she knew its effect at a luncheon party, or any other assemblage of invited guests; and therefore kept it up with brilliant success, making herself admired by all, and bringing out of all present the utmost that was in each—nay, even more than any of them had ever before found in themselves.

Lord Foxmore found himself agreeing with her as if they had but one mind, and the others agreed with each other equally well. So that it was not easy to find an opportune moment for leaving the dining-room.

At last they rose from the table, after the Baroness Diabolouski had promised Lord Foxmore to have the pleasantest of hunting breakfasts for him at Maplethorpe on the 1st of November. All applauded, even Twerleby, who, as he had been told by the Pearl, was never very comfortable on a horse, when suddenly there was heard the sound of wheels and the patter of horses' hoofs, as of a carriage coming up to the door.

"It sounds like four horses," said Lord Foxmore. "Yes, there they are, a barouche and four, evidently a hired one. Is the whole county coming here to-day?"

"Archæologists come sometimes," answered the Baroness Diabolouski. "They come in brakes with four horses and thirty people in each."

She began to move towards the door, and Lord Foxmore, turning away from the window, followed her, she talking pleasantly and the others following the example of her pleasant talking, while no one paid any attention to the carriage that had driven up to the door, nor to the strong ringing of the door bell that followed.

Suddenly the dining-room door was thrown open. The

butler stood up beside it, emphatically silent, and in walked the Pearl, followed by Mr. Blastmore and the Lawyer.

It has been truly said that all of us, more or less, if moved enough by an exciting cause, are unconsciously actors and actresses, because in fact histrionic art represents human nature strongly moved; and indeed the scene in that dining-room was very dramatic. Even the Rector of Humbleton-in-the-Hole would not have disgraced the footlights by his attitude. Lady RosSDen rejoiced with a reservation arising from bewilderment. Augustus Twerleby was glad to be relieved from that remorse against which the progressive relativity of truth had not availed, but he recoiled in terror from the immediate consequences of discovery. The Baroness Diabolouski was, for an instant, as if thunderstruck, but recovered herself by an excessive effort.

"My dearest Margaret," she said, coming forward expansively, "this is the happiest surprise that I—"

"Don't dare to approach me," said the Pearl, waving her back. "It is well that so many of my good neighbours happen to be here, so that I can make known at once, and without doing so in a more public manner, why and how I have been so strangely absent more than two months and a half. In the latter days of June I took an evening walk with that woman. She contrived cunningly to lengthen it in such a direction that our nearest way home would be by the ford, and that we should turn into the road at a time arranged beforehand."

"I expected to be misunderstood," said the Baroness. "It must have seemed so. But in fact I knew no more than the Emperor of China which way we were going."

"Our coming into that road," said the Pearl, ignoring the interruption, "was timed exactly to suit a friend of hers, who had arranged the plot with her."

"I was not even aware of his being in England," said the Baroness.

"My cook, *Suprême*," said the Pearl, "saw them together near Grumley Green, at or about five o'clock. He hid himself in a ditch and heard her (speaking in Italian) promise to contrive that I should be at a certain place by eight o'clock. If any one doubts it, I will send for him."

"If he could tell such a falsehood," said the Baroness,

"he would not hesitate to repeat it. Few people pass that way. I was out of the house then—in the shrubbery. How can I prove that I was not then in a field near Grumley Green? Some day you will know the truth about all this. Till then it accords not with my character and position to be in this house one moment longer than is required for packing, which will be done as quickly as possible. I must ask you to send for a fly, because I have no one to send. Augustus, you must come away."

Augustus in a prickly heat followed his terrible wife. The Pearl remained silent until they had left the room. Then she said:

"My answer is, that if she did not do, as I have stated on the evidence of a thoroughly credible witness, the man whose plot I am now going to relate would not have known when and where to find me."

"Well put," said Lord Foxmore. "I am ashamed of having taken it all for granted,—here in the house of my old friend, your dear and good father, and knowing you."

"How could you have doubted it with the apparent proofs that you had?" said the Pearl. "I disappeared one evening, without leaving any trace of myself. I was apparently dead. My cousin came here as the next heir."

"Yes, but I ought to have suspected something," said Lord Foxmore. "Why did he marry her all of a sudden after she had been here with you? I ought to have seen through that."

"Then I ought to have seen through her," said the Pearl, "when I had every chance of doing so. She has great powers—very great—worse than wasted. But I must go on with my story, and bring witnesses, because I cannot allow any question about it."

"There can't be any question about it now," said Lord Foxmore, "when we have seen you here safe and sound."

"Not to you," said the Pearl, "but to many there would, if not explained. That explanation I owe to myself and to you all."

"I am sure," said Lord Foxmore, "that we shall all listen with the greatest attention and respect."

"One word before you tell us the rest," said Charlotte Amelia to the Pearl, coming forward and taking both her hands. "Do let me say how delighted I am to see you

again safe and with us all. We *have* missed you so much. But you have had such a long drive—won't you eat something?"

"Yes," said Sir Henry Melford, "how stupid of us not to think of it."

"Thank you," said the Pearl, "we had luncheon on the road. But shall we go to the drawing-room? and there you can hear the rest."

They all followed her into the drawing-room, and when they were seated round her, the Pearl said :

"The plot arranged in that field will be evident when you have heard what happened. I had hardly turned into the road leading to the ford, when the Baroness pretended to be frightened at something, and, seizing my arm, dragged me to the side of the road near some trees, where immediately two men sprang out of the shadow and pinioned my arms. These, as you will see, were evidently put there to give occasion for what followed. I may as well say that the man, of whom I spoke as arranging the plot with her, had been in the county before. I don't remember his name, nor do I know what country he is a native of; but some of you met him here at dinner in the beginning of last January."

"I remember meeting him," said Lord Weybridge, "and wondering how he had come here."

Old Bundleton, who had brought him from Blumbury as a guest of his own, became very red in the face, and shuffled about his flat feet.

"We were shamefully taken in," said Charlotte Amelia.

"And you never invited him again," said Sir Henry Melford, who desired more than ever that all things directly or indirectly concerning himself should be comfortable.

"This man," said the Pearl, "drove up in a hired carriage and pair, and pretended to rescue me. The two men, who had seized me, ran away pretending to be afraid of him; and then he said that he had come to save me from a plot that he had accidentally discovered—a plot by which my cousin was to carry me off and so make me consent, through fear of scandal, to marry him."

"I am sure that Augustus never did such a thing," said Lady RosSDen, colouring up to the roots of her hair and the edge of her wig.

"So am I," said the Pearl; "but after his attempt here to persuade me into marrying him as in obedience to the wish of my father, who had never expressed such a wish to me, nor even hinted it,—and after the Baroness Diabolouski, who was his friend, had led me to the spot where the men were lying in wait for me,—what could I think? I ask you again, what *could* I think? What could I do at that moment but believe what I was told? How could I know or guess that the rescue was a solemn farce? These are not pleasant things, in any way, for me to speak of before twenty people, but I have been brought into such a position, that I have no choice."

"It was all that horrid woman," said Lady RosSDen; "that horrid woman, who got hold of poor Augustus and married him before he knew where he was."

"We mustn't put too much on the woman," said Lord Foxmore. "He wouldn't have married her without some reason or other, best known to himself. But we are interrupting Miss Malmaines."

"I can't understand the thing," said Lady RosSDen, addressing the Pearl. "Why did you send that telegram from Folkestone?"

"What telegram?"

"To say that you were going abroad to be married."

"I never sent it," said the Pearl. "I never sent a telegram in all my life. And I have not even seen Folkestone since I landed there with you."

"I had a telegram," said Lady RosSDen, "purporting to be signed by you, and telling me that you were going to be married abroad. I have it somewhere still and can show it to you. I started off to Paris two hours afterwards in hopes of tracing you and stopping it."

"I know nothing whatever about a telegram," said the Pearl. "I never heard of it till this moment."

"To prevent absenteeism," said the lawyer, speaking for the first time, and addressing Lady RosSDen, "there was, as you may remember, a clause in the will of your lamented brother, by which this estate would pass to Mr. Twerleby if Miss Malmaines were to marry a foreigner. Mr. Twerleby's marriage followed quickly the reception of the telegram. I will make no comments."

"If he could do that," said Lady RosSDen, "I give him up."

"I hope that you will not," said the Pearl. "Kindness, when a man is down, is powerful to reclaim—very powerful."

"Well, I will think about it," said she. "That awful woman must have sent the telegram to take us all in."

"No doubt," said the Pearl. "No one else could have done it. But I must go on. I was hurried into the carriage. The man recommended Backwater as a place of safety against my cousin's alleged attempt, and we started as if to go there, he sitting on the box. When we had gone about half way between here and Backwater, as nearly as I can guess, the carriage or fly stopped at a roadside inn, and he brought me a cup of tea, saying I must be tired. I thanked him, and drank the tea, for I was very thirsty, and soon felt an overpowering sleepiness. His plan was, there is no doubt, just what he had accused my cousin of—that is, to frighten me into a marriage. For this purpose he had a small vessel lying off the coast near Hunterscombe. *Suprême* heard him say so in the field near Grumley Green, and that was why he put something soporific into the tea. In the meanwhile *Suprême* had run home and told my dear faithful maid, Monica Greswolde, what he had heard. She made the coachman drive her to Hunterscombe, and so had a start of nearly two hours. I was under the influence of the soporific drug for so long, that I can only relate what was told me afterwards by eye-witnesses, and Mr. Blastmore, who was one, will put me right if I make a mistake. When Monica Greswolde had told Father Bramsby of the plot my cook had discovered, his nephew and himself with the powerful aid of my kind and valued friend, Mr. Blastmore, mounted at once and rode to the rescue. After they had ridden up and down a long time near the place indicated, they heard the sound of carriage wheels, and waited round the corner of another road behind some trees till it came near. Mr. Bramsby then charged the carriage, and this good friend of mine, here present, persuaded the driver by a vigorous application of his hunting whip. The man—I don't know what to call him, because nobody seems to know his name—jumped off the box and got inside, shouting out that he was armed. When Mr. Bramsby went at him, he fired a revolver and barely missed. Mr. Bramsby knocked the revolver down, but he must have been killed, close as he was, if Mr. Blastmore had not brought the butt end of his

hunting whip on it. Mr. Bramsby then collared my persecutor and dragged him out of the carriage ; but not without being badly stabbed in the left arm. That ended the struggle, as I was told, but I knew nothing of it. I was still unconscious, and they carried me into Father Bramsby's carriage, which he had ordered to be sent after them from Hunterscombe. While the carriage was driving away with Father Bramsby and me in it, I being still asleep owing to the drug that had been put into the tea, Mr. Blastmore was settling the account with the nameless conspirator in a very practical way."

"Of course I did," said Mr. Blastmore. "When I saw him stab Oswald, I laid hold of him. It wasn't likely that I should let him go without a hiding, when I had got a hunting whip in my hand. I take it that he won't forget *me* in a hurry."

"If you hit him as hard as you ride at your fences," said Lord Foxmore, "he must have had a baddish time."

"I take it that he *will* remember Benjamin Blastmore," said he. "I did enjoy paying him off."

"When I recovered from the effects of the soporific drug," said the Pearl, "I was at Hunterscombe ; and then I went elsewhere with Monica, because I thought it advisable under the circumstances to be in concealment during the remainder of my minority."

"Most advisable," said Lord Foxmore ; whereupon Lady Rosdden, remembering her own share in the circumstances, began to cry.

"My aunt was abroad," said the Pearl ; "I knew not where, except that she was moving about ; so I could not go to her. I passed some of the time in a cottage by the sea-shore at Old Sleetham, and then, when the Baroness, by some means unknown to me, managed to trace me, or thought she did so and came to spy, we went to a cottage, where my maid's mother lives, at Humbleton-in-the-Hole."

"Oh !" said the Rector, "that explains our puzzle. My daughter and I often wondered who a mysterious lodger was at that cottage, who used to walk out sometimes in the evening with two thick veils, and had a maid always beside her who had red hair and blue spectacles. We were told it was a lady from Wales, recovering from smallpox or something ; so of course we took care to keep out of the way."

"Not a bad dodge of old Mrs. Greswolde's," said Lord Foxmore, "and one likely to keep off intruders."

"On the second of this month," said the Pearl, "I went to Hunterscombe, and remained there until I came here, being of age to-day. I was there under the care of one who, all through that troublous time has been to me as a father,—I mean Father Bramsby,—and I have come here with two of my own father's old friends."

Here she paused for a moment, then said: "You must all congratulate me on having had, through all my troubles, such invaluable friends and such invaluable servants; for indeed there never was, nor ever could be, a truer cause for congratulation."

"I congratulate you with all my heart, and them also, on their gallant conduct," said Lord Foxmore.

"There's something a deal better still to come," said Mr. Blastmore. "She has done as I did, and got into the Church of God."

This announcement was too much for Lady RosSDen. While the other guests pressed round the Pearl, in spite of the "turning," with welcomes and good wishes, Lady RosSDen left the room, rang for her maid, and ordered an immediate packing. Soon afterwards there was a general move and a gradual departure.

When the last of the guests had left the house, the Pearl, going to her room, turned faint, grew deadly pale and perhaps would have fallen, if Monica, who was at hand, had not supported her in her arms.

"I am so tired," she said. "I suppose it has been all a little too much for me. I had better rest a little. But don't go."

"That I won't," said Monica. "Not if you told me ever so. It isn't safe at all for you, till she, at any rate, is off with her traps."

The Pearl threw herself on the bed and tried to sleep. She dosed restlessly, and when she woke about two hours later, Twerleby, with his terrible wife, was getting into one of two flies, and Lady RosSDen was with them. Lady RosSDen's maid was in the other fly.

"You have disgraced yourself and brought me to shame," said Lady RosSDen, as soon as they were inside. "I will have nothing more to do with you—nothing more. I cast

you off. I shall go to London to-night and revoke my will."

"If you do," said Twerleby, "I shall tell of you a great deal more than you would like to have told publicly. Shall I set down the items for your approval?"

"Well, my dear," said Lady RosSDen, "I didn't mean exactly that—"

"And you had better not mean it," said he sullenly. "Where are you going?"

"To my house in Backwater."

"Then you must take me in, I am hard-up."

"I—I will for a day or two, and then we must settle something. Don't say any more just now. I am so agitated."

The Pearl was then opening her eyes and saying: "I hope that Aunt Julia has not gone. I wanted to see her."

"They've got in," said Monica, running to the window.

"Stop her," said the Pearl. "I must and will see her."

Monica hurried downstairs, ran out, and stopped the fly about two hundred yards from the house. "Please, my lady," she said, "Miss Malmaines wishes particularly to see you, and *will* see you."

"If you get out," said Twerleby in a hoarse voice, "you must either come back and go with us, or let us go to your house, pending further arrangements."

"Yes, of course I shall come back," said Lady RosSDen. "But, you know, the servants are there, and they know you, and I have left half my things behind. It might be better for me to go to-morrow."

"She is in her bed-room, my lady," said Monica, opening the door of the fly.

Lady RosSDen obeyed the strangely impressive summons, and found the Pearl waiting for her.

"You mustn't go in this way, Aunt Julia," said the Pearl. "If you do, you will be implicated in all sorts of things. You must be seen here, after what has happened—seen here as if nothing had happened. Yes, you must. For your own sake, for the sake of my father, for the sake of all that you respect and care for, and would not dishonour, you *must*."

"You are right, my dear," said Lady RosSDen. "At least I suppose you are; for I am so bewildered that I hardly

know what I am doing. Yes, I will stay. But I am so agitated, I can't appear this evening. Will somebody get my maid and my luggage out, and tell them to go on without me to my house in Backwater?"

"I will get it all done, my lady," said Monica, leaving the room.

Lady Rossden retired to her bedroom. The Pearl rested again on the bed and again tried to sleep.

"But I can't," she said after awhile to Monica. "I feel as if something dreadful were going to happen."

"Nothing of the sort," said Monica. "It's only coming back here and all, and fretting after things, and you *won't* help yourself; and the young Squire—"

"He has gone away, and what can I do?" said the Pearl.

"Yes, but, ma'am, you mustn't let it end so," said Monica. "You have no right to let yourself be cheated out of your happiness in this world, which Almighty God has put before you to enjoy and make a good use of and profit by, for the good of your own soul and of many others too. You mustn't do that. You're killing yourself, that you are. You mustn't indeed—you *are* killing yourself and him too. Something has come between you. It's the devil's own work just now, when he knows that he can't get you away from the faith. You *must* have it cleared up, and made up. You must indeed."

"You dearest Monica," said the Pearl, "you are always kind and wise; and you have stood by me, helped me, advised me for the best, all through my troubles. I will be open with you alone about this, not with any one else. You have, I know not how, discovered the truth, and you have given me the best advice about it that you or any one could give; but to follow it is not in my power. He has gone away and means to stay away from here. It is all my fault. I must bear it. I shall never see him again in this world."

"It's no use talking," said Monica, "if you are to go on like that. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, you who are of age, and mistress of Maplethorpe. Do you suppose that such as he would turn sulky like a spoilt child? Fie, for shame! I wonder at you."

"It was my fault," said the Pearl, "that he has gone—"

"It wasn't," said Monica. "There's a misunderstanding somewhere, and it must be set right."

"He will never come where I am. He doesn't care. And he thinks—"

"But he does care and must care—couldn't you see it in his face as plain as if he said so? And he mustn't think—he shan't think. If nobody else will speak when he comes back, I *will*. I am not going to see you make yourself miserable and kill yourself for such childish nonsense, not I. You ought to be ashamed of yourselves—both of you."

"I *am* ashamed of myself," said the Pearl. "I have reason to be ashamed of myself, because I passed him at the ford, *where he saved my life*;—I passed, without speaking to him. He pulled up his horse and looked at me—I shall never forget that look—and I, in the presence of the groom, turned away from him, as if he were a man not fit to be known—"

"And what of that?" interrupted Monica. "Hadn't you been gammoned by a lot of lies?"

"Yes, I had."

"There is no doubt about it. It *must* be cleared up. And what about the groom? What did he know about you turning away? Nothing, of course. But the young Squire—what lies did they tell of him?"

"They said that he had been falsely married to a young lady, whom he afterwards saved from drowning, when, in despair, she threw herself into the sea."

"Bless us! the idea of his doing such a thing as that! Didn't he pull her out of the sea somewhere near Hunterscombe?"

"Yes—"

"Then I think I know, and can find out the rights of it—"

"Yes, but there is more than that," said the Pearl. "They told other lies of him—they must be lies, only I never shall know. But in his wonderful charity (and that shows me that they must be lies after my treatment of him), he came day after day, and taught me, and brought me into the Church of God. And then, the last day, when he went away and bade me good-bye, and said he should come no more—for his words could have had no other meaning—I never said one word—I let him go—and—"

"Well, it was all because of those lies. You were quite right. I mean to have it out, and set it straight. But I won't say one word more about it now. One might as well talk to a baby in long clothes."

"You have always been right about everything," said the Pearl. "Do as you think best—I can say no more, I have said already more than I would to anyone else."

"My opinion is," thought Monica, "that the young lady he pulled out of the sea is Mrs. Fetherhed now. If so, I can put that straight. The butler at Hunterscombe knows, I feel sure; but he won't speak; and quite right too—for people might ask questions and do a lot of harm to a good young lady." Then she said aloud: "It's too trying, ma'am, that it is, for you to be here all alone now, after all that has happened, and her ladyship ain't of no use. Mayn't I go and ask Mrs. Fetherhed to come and stop a few days with you?"

"Yes, do," said the Pearl. "I should like to see her, and Mr. Fetherhed, too, of course."

Within half an hour, Mrs. Fetherhed, looking out from an open window at Cubton, saw Monica arriving in a dog-cart, inferred that something was wrong at Mapletorpe, and went out to meet her.

"What is it? has she come safe home?" enquired Gertrude anxiously.

"Oh! yes, ma'am, it's all right, and *they're* gone off. But I come with a message from my mistress. And," added Monica, in a low voice, "may I speak with you, ma'am, for a minute?"

Mrs. Fetherhed led her a few yards away from the dog-cart. "With the greatest pleasure," she said. "Speaking with you will always be a pleasure to me. What is the message?"

"Miss Malmaines," said Monica, "was very tired, so to save her writing a note I came myself. It is to ask you and Mr. Fetherhed if you would be so kind as to come and stay with her a few days—she feels it so lonely, coming back—and all—and—"

"Yes, I will," answered Gertrude.

"But," interrupted Monica, "what I wanted to say particularly, is about the young Squire and my young lady. There's a something wrong between them—and I

knew you would help. It's a long story with an awful lot of lies to take them in, told by that Baroness, and set about—I don't know how. And they are both miserable, and they don't know what to do, any more than two children. One thing was, they said he had pretended to marry a young lady and then deserted her, and then pulled her out of the sea—"

"I understand," said Mrs. Fetherhed. "Thank you for telling me. It must be put right. I will never rest until it is put right. We are engaged to dine out this evening, but we will come to Maplethorpe to-morrow, soon after breakfast."





CHAPTER LXXII.



THE next morning Lady RosSDen appeared at breakfast, and (as her own words to herself expressed it) "made the best of things."

But in fact things had, in a manner of speaking, made the best of themselves; because the nineteen guests had laid all the blame on the Baroness Diabolouski, and looked on "dear Augustus" as a sort of cat's-paw. Their conclusion, though contrary to fact, had a good result, without any practical unfairness. It made her seem no worse than she absolutely was, and therefore did no injustice to her. It made him no happier than her, because he knew it not; nor was likely to know it, being matrimonially compromised.

Before going downstairs "to make the best of things," Lady RosSDen met the Pearl, and said, "My dear Margaret, you shouldn't have told all that before those people yesterday."

"I am sure," answered the Pearl, "that, on reflection, you would not wish my father's daughter to have done otherwise. My disappearance was known; and I had to explain it, or be under a cloud. Besides, I said that you were abroad while those things were happening."

"Yes, I see now," said Lady RosSDen, "but I have been so flurried. You couldn't help it."

This closed the question, and then the breakfast bell rang. At breakfast the Pearl, old Blastmore and the lawyer made themselves so pleasant that Lady RosSDen almost forgot the disclosure; and, after it was over, consulted the Pearl's lawyer, who was hers also, about "poor

Augustus." In consequence, arrangements were begun by which, during her lifetime, he was to have his former allowance, clear of his debts, and the same after her death—but without any remainder to his wife, otherwise the Baroness Diabolouski. This, she thought, was quite enough : and so thought the lawyer.

While that business was in the course of settlement, Mrs. Fetherhed arrived, leaving her husband to follow later. She found the Pearl in a boudoir upstairs.

"Thank you so very much for coming to stay with me. I feel so very lonely just now, and—"

"Yes, I have heard all from that good Monica. I should have come yesterday, but she told you why we could not. After seeing her, I felt that I *must* come as soon as possible. I could not in conscience put it off, for, had I done so, I might have made myself responsible, by default, for wrecking the happiness of the best and kindest friend I ever had—I mean Mr. Oswald Bramsby. I owe to him, and to his good uncle, more—immeasurably more—than I can ever repay ; and therefore, I would not willingly have lost a moment in coming. I gather from Monica, that false reports have been circulated about him, and that there is some misunderstanding. Tell me what they said of him?"

"My dear Gertrude," said the Pearl, "(for, after what you have said, I cannot find it in me to call you by any other name), I know what you mean, and as you have spoken plainly, I will answer plainly."

"Well," said Gertrude, "didn't the Baroness Diabolouski say that he proposed to her?"

"She did ; but I should never have believed it, only that Mr. Bramsby himself invited her to Hunterscombe. She read out the invitation at breakfast, and consulted Aunt Julia about accepting it."

"Did she really put it so?" said Gertrude. "Why, it was her own doing. She got herself invited to Hunterscombe by making my uncle Blastmore, who was going there, believe that she wanted instruction from Father Bramsby, in order to become a Catholic. Oswald Bramsby never believed in it at all, but he didn't like to refuse my uncle, nor to run the risk of refusing to help her if she were possibly repentant. As to his proposing to her, it is too absurd : but, in point of fact, I know it to be a lie. He

kept out of her way all the time, until one day she caught him in the wood, where Charles, who always thought she was up to something, interrupted her. He told me that she looked so foolish and tried to smile, but that she had evidently been crying. Mr. Blastmore rode over with her letter to Lady Rosssen, accidentally found, in which she spoke of being engaged to Oswald Bramsby, or hinted as much. Father Bramsby showed it to her; and she then pretended that she meant her first husband—but I must tell you all about that when we have more time. It is quite enough that he had no more idea of marrying her than the cat. Now I want to speak first of the first lie. I understood from Monica that you were told he attempted falsely to marry someone—were you not?”

“Yes,” said the Pearl. “That was the first lie. It must be a lie. That I have thought since; but it made me treat him so that he never can—never will—get over it.”

“Were you not also told that he saved her from drowning?”

“Yes,” said the Pearl.

“Then,” said Gertrude, “I am going to tell you the whole story from my own personal knowledge. I am going to give you the most complete proof of what I would not tell to anyone, except the four people who have a right to know it. The real man who attempted the false marriage is older and taller than Oswald Bramsby, and had black hair. He called himself a Prussian Pole, and was living in Paris at a time when Oswald Bramsby was studying the law in London. While the ceremony of his pretended marriage was going on, the girl detected the fraud, or had reason to suspect it. Immediately afterwards, she charged him with it and told him to go. He made all sorts of excuses, entreated her forgiveness, and professed his willingness, if she would but forgive him, to go off to his parents, obtain their consent to the marriage and take her home to their castle as his bride. She believed in the sincerity of his words, and he went away immediately, declaring that he would put it right, and entreating her to wait for his return. Of course it was a lie. She waited; and at last started for England, lost her purse, or had it stolen with all her money in it, and would have been penniless and friendless in a foreign country, if Oswald Bramsby, whom she had never met before, had not

seen her distress at the terminus in Paris and paid for her journey home. When she had landed in England, she came into Ilsetshire, and made her way to the coast—I will tell you afterwards why. Friendless, as far as she knew, and without religion, she, in a moment of temporary madness, threw herself, or rather let herself fall off a rock into the sea. You know who saved her—but you don't know who it was that he saved—*it was myself*. He saved me—body and soul. Through him I was received into the Church. At Hunterscombe I was reconciled afterwards to my uncle. At Hunterscombe I met my husband. I think that I have given you abundant and superabundant evidence, but I will tell you one thing more. I have shown you from my own knowledge that you were deceived by a false identity invented for the purpose of deceiving you; but I can do more. I can show you *who he was*. That man was *your cousin, Augustus Twerleby*. During that terrible time, when I was morally compelled to wait awhile in Paris, I found accidentally a half sheet of paper—a portion of a letter in his handwriting, dated from an address in London. I have kept it by Father Bramsby's advice, and brought it here. Look at it."

"This is my cousin's direction in London," said the Pearl, "and that is his handwriting. I never can forgive myself for having believed—even for a moment;—there is no excuse—"

"We must leave scruples alone," said Gertrude, "and repair the evil as soon as we can and may. It was no fault of yours. But what induced you to believe that Oswald Bramsby ever could have proposed to the Baroness Diabolouski?"

"Some lines in his writing that dropped out of her pocket. She picked them up, and she gave them to me, and she said that he had written them for her. Of course you can't explain that." The Pearl went across the room, opened a travelling-bag, and brought out a paper.

"These?" said Gertrude. "Why, they were meant for me. I remember his writing them. Wait one minute. I see Charles riding up."

She left the room, and in a few minutes came back with her husband, who smiled expansively.

"Do you know anything about this poetry?" she said.

"I should think I did," said he. "I wanted something that I could give to you—not some of those hackneyed things out of Shakespeare or Byron, but something out of the common way, and so Bramsby got them from somewhere. Let me see—yes, it was from Dante's *Vita Nuova*. I remember that he had to write it out twice for me, because he missed the first copy off his writing-table in the hall. Madame Devilwousky was staying there, peeping about and going in for being pious and setting her cap at him and swearing that he had proposed. She must have boned the poetry to make the lie go down. I always knew that she would be at something, but I never should have thought of all that. Well, upon my word! Are you quite sure she's off the premises? I think I shall go and get a stable-bucket ready!"

Said Gertrude to the Pearl in a low voice, after Fetherhed had retired pleasantly: "Have I shown you enough?"

"Enough, and more than enough," said the Pearl. "I know enough to know what he is and what I am not. I half knew it before—all those days when he came and taught me the truth, and when I might have said—and did not say—. Gertrude, I am not worth a moment's thought from him."

"You mustn't be talking nonsense, you know," said Gertrude. "You're above that. It must and shall be set right as soon as he comes home."

"You are so kind," said the Pearl, "but it will be of no use. He can't care—he oughtn't to care about me after what I did. Remember, he saved my life. You must have seen yourself that he doesn't. Father Bramsby said that he should come for my First Communion. And he never came, nor ever wrote an excuse."

"Never came?" said Gertrude. "He travelled all night from London—he couldn't get away before—and arrived about six in the morning. His uncle gave him Holy Communion about seven o'clock, which of course he received for your intention; then he had a morsel of breakfast, and had to be off again directly after Mass, to London, where there was to be a meeting with some learned counsel on this trustee affair. They were talking about it at breakfast afterwards. I forgot you were not there, or I should have told you. Yes—it must and shall be put right, if I have to walk all the way from Cubton to Hunterscombe."



CHAPTER LXXIII.



THE Pearl had lost no time in planning and carrying on, with Father Bramsby's advice and assistance, the restoration of the old disused chapel at Maplethorpe ; while, at the same time, she never forgot her responsibilities with regard to the codicil that was lost and found. She did indeed bear her prospective loss bravely, but the trial was, in itself, hard to bear. With the fullest consent, she made her father's decision her own ; but how could she carry it out ? Was there an heir male of the dispossessed ? and, if so, where was she to find him ? Day after day she searched the archives of the family, and looked in every receptacle where letters or papers might be ; she made her lawyer, on his return to London, look through the family papers and deeds in his strong room ; but no light was thrown on the question.

Three weeks passed, and the chapel progressed rapidly. Lady Rosden had reconciled herself thereto, and even to the Pearl's "turning."

"After all," thought she, "Margaret only followed her father's example, and he was *so* good. And Mr. Oldchurch says that we all belong to the same, only we belong to it differently from the others, and ought to remain as we are, because we know better."

Of the codicil she said to herself : "It was a bit of knight-errantry on the part of my poor dear brother, and just like him. But the instructions are a secret. Nobody knows anything about it but the trustees, and, as Sir Henry says, the thing must be kept quite quiet. Then in four

years there will be an end of the thing, unless Margaret goes on bothering herself about nobody knows who, and lets it ooze out and brings false claimants down upon her."

By the first week in October the chapel was finished, and the Bishop had promised to come on, or about, the middle of the month, to hold a solemn opening of it and dedication (by the Pearl's wish) to St. Oswald, King and Martyr.

"Poor Augustus!" said Lady Rossden one morning in the beginning of the month, as she entered the library where the Pearl was, and sat down before a large piece of work stretched on a frame. "Poor Augustus! I never come into this room without thinking of him. That was a dreadful business. Too dreadful for anything." This remark she made aloud to the Pearl, before the arrival of the two trustees, who were expected to luncheon.

"I should never have believed it," said Lady Rossden; "I wonder that the Priest didn't show him how dreadfully wrong it was."

"He took care," said the Pearl, "that no Priest should have an opportunity of doing so."

Lady Rossden remembered his mysterious hints about returning to the Church of England as by law established, and worked in silence at the banner that she was embroidering for Mr. Oldchurch, till Sir Henry Melford was announced.

"I have come too soon," said he.

"Never too soon," said the Pearl. "But where are Lady Melford and—"

"My wife and her most worthy father—that pink of respectability, always known in Flintshire as old Bundleton, because he never was young—are coming on."

"And so is your co-trustee, Father Bramsby," said the Pearl. "He remains, as you have promised to do, to dine and sleep."

"I shall be charmed," said Sir Henry; "but I was to tell you from my wife, with many regrets, that she is unable to stop here to-night. She must go home with her father after luncheon—parish business, I think. But about this co-trusteeship. I don't believe that you can possibly find the great unknown who represents the dispossessed owner. It is rather odd that I told Bramsby about the story and tradition, when we met at the Hunt Ball in Osmundsbury

some ten months ago. However, in the endeavour to carry out the wishes of my old friend, your dear father, I was hunting all day yesterday among old registers of that date at Osmundsbury and Little Blumford, and I have brought some memoranda that may lead to something. We can look them over this evening."

"Thank you very much," said the Pearl. "I wish with all my heart to find him. I have looked in vain among all the old papers here."

At this moment Father Bramsby was announced, followed by Mr. Oldchurch, who came accidentally.

This incongruous arrival was opportune. Lady RosSDen wanted to see Mr. Oldchurch, and Sir Henry Melford wanted to see Father Bramsby, though he had no intention of ever being otherwise than as he was. They talked in their different ways pleasantly, till Sir Henry said :

"Where is Oswald?"

"He is still detained by business," said Father Bramsby, "not his own, but other people's. He has been for a fortnight in Paris. I half expected that he might be at home to-night, but this morning he writes me word that an important deed is missing and that he may have to go somewhere in Brittany about it."

At this moment old Bundleton arrived with Charlotte Amelia; soon after they went in to luncheon, and conversation flowed like a running stream, plentiful and sparkling.

"I have not been in this room," said Sir Henry to the Pearl, "since the day of your coming of age."

"I am glad to welcome you now, on my own account," said she. "That day I only interrupted, and had, contrary to my inclination and principles, to stand up on the spur of the moment, finding them all here, and speak before them like a tragic actress. I shall hope for an opportunity of welcoming them all here by-and-by."

"Your welcome is and will be," said Sir Henry, "as perfect as your admirable explanation, in which you outdid yourself. Speaking as you spoke then, you would have quelled a raging mob. I never was present at so grand a scene in all my life."

"But only think of poor Augustus," said Lady RosSDen. "there he is—tied to that horrid creature and made

answerable for her misdeeds. It really is too hard." Sir Henry, while of opinion like Lord Foxmore that Twerleby was answerable on his own account, accepted her version for the sake of the Pearl : and so did Mr. Oldchurch and Mr. Bundleton.

"The poor devil," said Sir Henry to Father Bramsby, "is in a sort of penal servitude for life. We may leave him alone now, I think."

"Certainly," said Father Bramsby. "Moreover I have heard how and why the temptation laid hold of him so strongly. When he had fallen away from the Faith given to him by God, the rest was a game of chance, with the devil as *croupier*. Others fall away beforehand, and they too had better examine their consciences while they have time, for, if they have turned away from the light, they are on the way to eternal darkness."

"This is my first and last reminder," he thought. "After this I can say no more."

Sir Henry winced and said nothing. When they were leaving the room, he said to the Pearl : "I was just thinking of that unfathomable Baroness Diabolouski. She has, like you, the qualities of a *grande dame*, and she has great powers of conversation. Yet she acted like a common criminal. How was it?"

"She is a woman of extraordinary powers," said the Pearl, "but she chose a wicked course and failed, even in this world."

"I heard of her distributing tracts when she was at Blumbury," said he.

"Believing in the Catholic Church all the while," said the Pearl ; "and that gives the key to her enigmatical action. An apostate Catholic will stop at no wickedness, if tempted."

"What they call in America, 'pure cussedness,'" said Sir Henry.

"Precisely," said the Pearl. "An apostate Catholic is a perfect example of 'cussedness.'"

"I have not seen the chapel once since it was done up," said Mr. Oldchurch. Everyone expressed a desire to see it, except the two who had watched and directed the whole process of restoration ; but the motives of that desire varied according to their respective beliefs, or rather views. Mr. Oldchurch desired to find in its outward appearance the

essential oneness of ritualism and pre-reformation Catholicity, as proved by Dr. Benson's announcement that he sat in St. Augustine's chair. Mr. Oldchurch further desired to show, for the instruction of Lady RosSDen, that the Roman obedience and the Church of England as by law established are one, by a larger and ever widening essentiality than superficial people can see. How the essence of a thing could be other than it was without being something else, he did not explain. Old Bundleton wanted to see the popery with his own eyes, that he might point a moral and adorn a tale about the awful perversion of Malmaines and his only child, who had been caught by the Jesuits.

When they had come out of the chapel, Mr. Bundleton fired a parting shot at Mr. Oldchurch, while the latter was hurrying away to catch a train.

"How about the continuity?" said he. "All this popery was flourishing in the days of Anselm and the rest, and all done away with by Edward VI. and Elizabeth in the 'Thirty-nine Articles.'"

"That is the *accessories*, my dear friend," said Mr. Oldchurch.

"Stuff!" said old Bundleton. "It's a different religion, nothing short of it. The congregation of faith—"

Mr. Oldchurch departed with a deprecating wave of the hand, and soon Mr. Bundleton and Charlotte Amelia, after a walk in the garden, drove home.

When they had gone, Sir Henry said, "I wonder whether there can be any secret drawer in that old cabinet in the library."

"There is one," said the Pearl, "but I have tried it. The codicil was hidden there."

"There may be more than one," said he. "I should like to experimentalize without any belief in the existence of the great unknown."

"Do try," said the Pearl. "If there is another secret drawer, we might find some clue to the mystery."

"Then let us go," said he.

They went into the library, followed by Father Bramsby. The Pearl showed the secret drawer, and opened it.

"Nothing," said Sir Henry. "*Il gran nulla*. But there is a corresponding one on the other side that opens in a different way. Look, I have found the spring. But it

does not go so far back as the other. There must be a narrow space behind."

He pulled out the secret drawer and felt inside, but could find nothing.

"Couldn't thought-reading help us somehow?" he said.

"Don't ask for the devil's help," said the Pearl. "I will not have that."

These words made him wince again, reminding him, he knew not why, of what Father Bramsby had said; but he set it aside for consideration in the Greek kalends, and felt about. He tried every way that he could think of, and then he said, "Let us have a light, I might see something that would guide me."

The Pearl lighted a candle that stood on the library table, and he held it close to the dark recess. At one side in a dark corner, he saw a small round circle of brass quite flush with the back of the cabinet, and therefore not perceptible to the touch alone. Withdrawing the light, he pressed it: the spring flew open, discovering a narrow but deep receptacle that descended downwards behind the secret drawer, and one or two drawers below it. Having taken out the drawers, he was able to feel behind, and presently caught hold of something. It was a roll of yellow MS. written on vellum with faded ink, in the very small pointed handwriting of the seventeenth century. He took it out and gave it to the Pearl.

"This might tell us something," he said, "but I can't read it."

"The handwriting of that time," said Father Bramsby, "is more difficult to read than earlier ones, but I have deciphered with a good deal of study some old deeds of ours at Hunterscombe, and I daresay I may be able to make something of this."

"Then we shall have it out in the gallery after dinner," said Sir Henry. "And now I must go and have a little fresh air and a cigar in the park."

While he was thus occupied in the dim October twilight, a soft air whispering through falling leaves, and a young moon, red and horned, rising above the old church tower in the valley, Twerleby and his terrible wife had just arrived in Paris, hating each other with much devotion to the powers of darkness whose example they elected to

follow. While passing along the Rue de Rivoli, intending to proceed southwards in a few days, the Baroness Diabolouski was seen by the General Foreigner from a window *au cinquième*. Down he came, out into the street and onwards, till he stood before her.

"You betrayed me," he said; "I was assailed by many men armed."

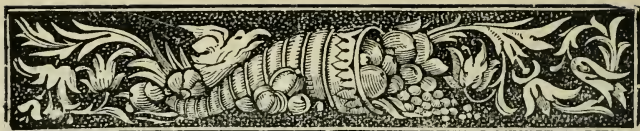
We know that the many men armed were Oswald and Mr. Blastmore, who had no other arms than hunting whips; but the Baroness Diabolouski, having retreated from the dining-room at Maplethorpe before the Pearl had described the scene, had nothing to say about it, though she completely discredited the statement. But he did not wait for her to speak.

"Yes, by many men armed, with swords and revolvers. I was hurt and wounded, and a long time ill. That could not have been if you had not betrayed me. Do not speak. No one else knew of it. But I shall venge myself,—yes, I shall venge myself, if I wait for the revenge ten years. And he shall not marry her, I swear it. He shall die, if he is not dead now. I have seen to that."

The General Foreigner suddenly disappeared, and she left Paris two hours afterwards, Twerleby following later.

They were travelling southwards, frightened and impenitent, while Father Bramsby, having deciphered the concluding lines of the time-stained document found by Sir Henry Melford, heard the bell ring and went down to dinner at Maplethorpe.





CHAPTER LXXIV.



HEN Father Bramsby and Sir Henry Melford had joined Lady Rosdden and the Pearl after dinner, in the long gallery at Maplethorpe, said the former, pointing to a discoloured roll of papers in his hand, "I have been deciphering the old documents found by Miss Malmaines in the hiding hole at Hunterscombe, and have brought them here. One is peculiarly interesting as a record of the time ; and if you will allow me, I will read it to you this evening, after we have deciphered Sir Henry's new discoveries. It is headed, YE TRUE HISTORIE OF MY DESPOYLEMENT. But all the names of the persons and places are in cipher, so that I do not know to what place or family it refers. Now let us read the papers discovered in the library to-day ; and then I will read the narrative of the 'despoylement.'"

Father Bramsby opened the roll of papers, fastened together by a bit of white silk, yellow with age, and after a minute or two began to read, as follows :

YE DEEDE BY WHYCHE MY UNCLE MAYDE OVER TO MEE YE LANDES AND HOUSE OF MAPLETHORPE WITH THE MANORS THEREOF.

"This is dreadful and most exciting," exclaimed Sir Henry. "But I *won't* believe in the mysterious unknown. Please read on."

"The date is 1615," said Father Bramsby. "Some of the words are indistinct and some illegible, but what I have made out is as follows :

"I, John Malmaines, of Maplethorpe, in the countie of Ilsetshire, do undertake by this Deede under my hand and

seale to sell unto my neph . . [illegible] Brian Malmaines and unto his heires for ever, the Manors, Landes and tene-ments of Maplethorpe, with all the rights thereto belonging, promising and declaring, so help me God, not to molest him or his heires in the peaceable possession thereof. In considera-tion whereof he to me my landes and house by the sea called [illegible] be, whereto by the lates of this Realm he has right also : and he doth hereby covenant and declare that he will leave me in peacefull possession of the pro always. I leave to him the peace poss of orpe, its landes and hereditaments and m thereto belonging, and that I and my descendants do, as he requireth of me, cease to be called and designated by the name of Malmaines, and forego for ever all and everie claim to the aforesaid pro of

“Given under my hand and seale, this 16th day Octobris, 1615.

“John Malmaines.”

“Brian Malmaines.”

“This is most curious,” said the Pearl. “But an idea occurs to me. The lands and house by the sea, called by some name ending in ‘be,’ can be no other than Hunterscombe.”

“Then our friend Oswald Bramsby would be the mysterious unknown—” said Sir Henry Melford.

“Not so fast,” said Father Bramsby, “there are many houses by the sea.”

“But this is in the same county,” said the Pearl, “and ending in ‘be.’ Otherwise the county would have been named.”

“Let us examine the other papers,” said Father Bramsby.

“See,” said Sir Henry, “here is an old map, roughly drawn.” On it was written, “The land, and house by the sea, which I, Brian Malmaines, do make over to my Uncle John and his heires for ever.”

It was evidently Hunterscombe, for though the name was not written, the shapes and names of the fields, and the acreage of the estate, were precisely those of Hunterscombe and of no other.

“Now you must be satisfied,” said the Pearl to Father Bramsby.

"I always thought," said he, "that Hunterscombe came to us by a marriage with an heiress, and that we took her name. Yet the old pedigree begins with John of Hunterscombe, sixteen hundred and something, and we come directly from him, father and son, generation after generation. There is no mention of his fathers or ancestors."

"That is very suggestive," said Sir Henry, "and to my mind conclusive. It's odd that, when I met Oswald at the Osmundsbury ball nearly a year ago, I told him the tradition about Brian Malmains and the ford. But all doubt would be set at rest, if we could only find the key of the cipher used in Father Bramsby's old documents."

"I must confess," said Father Bramsby "that I do remember a vague tradition about Hunterscombe. It was told me by my father's old nurse, when I was a child. My grandfather died of fever somewhere abroad, having first lost his wife; and his two little children, my father and aunt, were brought to Hunterscombe by that old nurse. My father lived at Hunterscombe, and my aunt became a nun. It was a perilous thing in the days of persecution, to have any written documents, not knowing whom they might implicate, nor how they might be found and laid hold of, bringing those named in them to confiscation, or the hideous death of hanging, drawing and quartering. That is the reason why, when any were written, the names were generally in cipher. This old nurse gave my father, on the day he came of age, after Mass, an old pocket book, with two or three yellow bits of paper in it. She told him that she had it from his father when he was dying, with strict injunctions to give it to his son, the day he came of age; and to command him, in like manner to transmit it to his eldest son, and on no account to let it be lost, for, she added, the possession of Hunterscombe in some way depended on it. It is many years since I looked at it, but I have of course always kept it carefully since. It is in the bottom of my dressing case. Oswald knows of it. His father was my only brother. I will fetch it. It may throw some light on something."

Father Bramsby went upstairs, and returned in a few minutes with the old pocket book. He opened it, and took out a yellow bit of paper, folded small, and much torn where the creases were. He held it up to the light, and with the

magnifying glass made out in very small faded writing, the words: *Key to my ciphers. John, of Hunterscombe.*

"This is the lost key, evidently," said Father Bramsby. "One can see that, by comparing it with this document: the words in cipher are the same as those that it interprets. I can now read it to you all through, without blanks."

He then read the document, using the key. It was as follows:

YE TRUE HISTORIE OF MY DESPOYLEMENT WRITTEN
FOR THE INFORMING OF MY DESCENDANTS.

On the eve of the Purification of Our Lady Saint Mary, my son being absent in foreign parts, I was sitting with my dear daughter Margaret in the great gallerie, when we heard the big bell at the gate ring a loud peal. And soon after, they came to tell me that one of the men of our good neighbour Sir John Crofts (cipher), Knight of Oldham (cipher) beyon^d Osmundsbury (cipher), would speake with mee and with no one else. I descended into the great hall, and the man sayd he had orders from his Master to give the packet into my own handes, and to ask if I had aught to command him thereupon. It was a small letter, sealed and tied with silk. I opened it and took it to read in one of the windows, the evening drawing in, and I read these words:

"To my well beloved friend John Malmaines, of Mapletorpe, health and greeting. I prythee, in God's name, have a care what thou dost, for the king's pursuivants be about again, and J. . . . B. . . . hath been heard to say that he should be bound to unearthe the foxe in your covertes before that he had done with the matter. I have bought the grey gelding in my owne name for Mistress Margaret, with the money thou gavest to me, and will send him over to-morrow with the two falcons.*

"Your true and lovinge friend to command,

"Sir John Crofts, Knight (cypher)."

That day fell on a Saturday, and we were to have Mass sayd (by the good Father who comes as if to teach musick to my daughter) by six of the clock the next daye; but seeing matters to be in this wise, I sent trustie Joseph down to . . .

* Catholics were not allowed to possess a horse above the value of £5.

and . . . to tell them to be here with their families by five of the clock, and to come with dark lanthorns, not to the great doore, but up by the dark postern leading uppe to the east corner of the great gallerie, where Joseph will stand to let them in. And so it fell out. They came, and the Mass scarce ended, when we were making oure thanksgiving after receiving the precious Bodie and Bloode of Our Lorde, there was great noise of men and horses heard galloping down the oak avenue, and presentlie a great thundering at ye gate. The good Father went through the small panel at the head of the postern stairs, and shut it downe, while Joseph spread the carpet thereon; and Margaret with great haste hid away ye vestments and sacred vessels, and letting downe her long hair in her chamber where they were, made as though she were tiring herself. They soon forced the door below, and were presentlie all over the house, taking such plate and jewels as they had a mind to. But Sir John Crofts came soon after and made them to restore these things, whereat they were much angered. And after they had searched everywhere and found nothing, I gave them some beer with bread and cheese out of the buttery, and they so departed.

Then when all was quiet we brought the good Father out of the place where he was hid, and went to the dining-hall where the breakfast was prepared, but scarce had sat we down thereto, when my daughter grew very white, as if she were like to faint, and turning round, I saw my apostate nephew looking in at the window with his face close to the glass. "It is too late now," sayd I, "to conceal the good Father, for he has seen him; we must say that he has come for the musick lessons." With that my nephew did come into the room, and sayd, smilinge and with a comelie greetinge, "Do not be disturbed. I will sit down to break my fast with you, for, though it be yet early, I have ridden six miles. I thought to have come with the Sheriff's men, and holpen you to be rid of them: but I am late." And therewith he sat down. But Margaret could taste no food all the while. And after that we had finished, he said, "Uncle, I would speake with you alone." Whereupon I went with him into the great gallerie, and he said, "I can see very well that the strangere who breakfasted with you is no musick master, but a Mass Priest. However you have nowt to feare from mee. So that I have my owne rights, I leave other folks to follow their

conscience. *I must now speake touching my owne affaires. You know well how I have loved and do love your fayre daughter Margaret, and I come to-day to entreat of you to persuade her to be myne. If she will, I forgo all my rights to this place—*

"Rights to this place!" sayd I; *"what mean you, Sir nephew?"*

"I mean what I say, good uncle," quoth he. *"Know you not that by the laws of this realm, you, being a popish recusant, I, as your next of kin, can and ought to claim all the landes that be yours? You disobey the King's Majestie and the lawfull government set over this realm by God Himselfe, who tells us to honour and obey the King's Majestie, and therefore it be my dutie as a good and true subject of God and the King, our dear and honoured Lord King James" (here he doffed his cap, which he did not to the name of God Almightye), "it be my dutie,"* sayd he, *"as your next of kin by the laws of this realm, (I having abjured the abominable errors of popery) to take unto myself these landes of Maplethorpe, and have care that the damnable idolatrie of the Mass be abolished therefrom and made to cease for ever. It is my dutie,"* sayd he, *"but if Margaret will consent to be my wife, I care for nowt else. I will give up all for her, for I doe love her so. But if she willeth not, the law must have its course."*

"Then," sayd I, *"will you take away the landes and properties of your father's only brother, who has been to you as a father, and leave him and his children to be beggars? By my troth, yours is the devil's religion, mightie good to live in, while all is fayre in this world, but mightie bad to die in. But this world and our lives in it last only a few years—months—days perchance—and the other life for all eternitie. I marvel at you, Sir nephew,"* quoth I.

"Not so," sayd he, *"good uncle. I must follow my conscience. If Margaret refuseth mee, I will be content with these landes of Maplethorpe and will give to you the old house near the sea with the farms round it, on condition that you make Maplethorpe over to me by a proper sale—for I will to stand well with my neighbours, who are your very good friends: and you sign a deed of sale, surrendering to me the landes and manors of Maplethorpe, and I give to you for it all the lande by the sea. And this is a fayre sale, looking at the rights I have—for the whole should be myne, by the laws of this realm. I give to you one day to consider of it, and to*

ask my fayre cousin, and I will come to-morrow to heare her answer. Entreat her to be myne, and I give uppe all for her sake. You may know by that the love I bear to her. Tell her I wait her reply." So sayd my apostate nephew and went his way. Scarce had he departed, when my poore childe came into the gallerie and asked of me what he had sayd, and when I had told her, she wept and sayd she should ask the good Father what she should do. But I,—knowing her desire was to vow her life to God in the Convent of our Benedictine dames at Brussels, of which the Lady Mary Percy was the abbess and founder,—I sayd I would not have her to torment herself more, nor be deprived of her holy vocation for any fletinge goods of this world, not even for the dear home that I loved so well, and of which my poore son would be robbed. "Besides," I sayd to comfort her, "you may know well, my childe, what faith an apostate would keep with man, who had kept no faith with God. It were no wisdom, even by this world's teaching, to sacrifice my dear daughter, and to feel sure that, so soon after as he could find occasion, he would break faith with me."

And so, when my nephew returned, he had his answer, whereat he marvelled much and was very wroth. But having a notary with him, they wrote a paper and made me to sign it, whereby I had to make a mock sale to him of all my landes and estates, save the house and farms by the sea; and he, on his part, bound himself by a solemn oath to leave me in peaceful possession of the same and to trouble mee no more.

So I was despoyled and forced to leave my home.

I did so at break of day the next morning, bringing with mee the sacred vestments and altar furniture, and came to Hunterscombe (cipher) by the sea, and took that name. But I onlie stayed there a little while, fearing him; for I knew well that his promise was not worth to mee more than the paper on which he did write it. So I made over my house and farms by the sea to my good neighbour, Squire Bramsby, a true and honourable gentleman, though he was brought up in the new learning. He sendeth to mee the rents yeare by yeare, and taketh care of the place for me and for my sonne, until it may please God to restore quiet times to this unhappie land.

And then, having so ordered my affairs, I set sail for Flanders with my dearest childe, and brought her to the Convent at Brussels, and heard her make her vows to God in

that holy house, where she will pray for mee and myne and for that unhappie man who hath despoyled my son.

John de Malmaines (cipher) of Maplethorpe, now John de Hunterscombe, eldest son and heyre of Robert de Malmaines, of Maplethorpe, and of Margaret Bouchier his wife, wrote this in the year of our Lord at Ghent, 1618.

Postscriptum 1625.

Since I wrote the above, my dear sonne has returned from the warres, and is at Hunterscombe, and I learn from him that he is about to marrie the onlie childe, now a Catholick, of my good friend Squire Bramsby (cipher); and so I have written to counsel him to take her name for our better concealment and his peace.

The ende.

"Then here ends our trusteeship," said Sir Henry Melford, when Father Bramsby had finished reading.

"Yes, that clears up everything," said the Pearl.

"Thank God, it does," said Father Bramsby, "and puts an end to all anxiety. For I can answer for Oswald. He certainly will refuse to accept Maplethorpe, and will set you free."

The Pearl said nothing, but rose from her chair, and walked slowly towards the other end of the room, while Lady Rossden said,

"Oh! do you think so? How nice it would be of him. But he has such a pretty place of his own. Then we can all be comfortable, and feel that there is an end of the thing."

"It is a curious history," said Sir Henry, "and I am glad that I was present at the *dénouement*. There is the very chapel, now restored, where those good people came to hear Mass on that troublous October morning, two hundred and seventy years ago; and there is the very place where the Jesuit Father was hidden, and there is the turret staircase, half built up, where trusty Joseph stood to let the people in. Miss Malmaines will no doubt have it all restored. Does that convent still exist anywhere? I wonder whether the name of Margaret Malmaines is to be found in its archives."

"Those nuns," said Father Bramsby, "or rather their spiritual children, are now at Oulton Abbey in Staffordshire.

The convent at Brussels was founded in 1594 by Lady Mary Percy. The convent at Ghent was founded from Brussels in 1624—the year before John of Hunterscombe wrote his postscript. It was called the Abbey of the Immaculate Conception—a name, by the way, well for those to remember who accuse Pope Pius the IX. of proclaiming a new dogma in 1854. The nuns of the Abbey at Ghent came to England and lived for a time at Caverswall Castle, until they moved to Oulton. We have finished it all just in time. There is the bell for night prayers.”





CHAPTER LXXV.



THE world, though big as compared with our own bodies and our own eyesight, seems very small sometimes relatively to the people who come together in a small compass, real or ideal.

This, in other and better words, occurred to Oswald when, before leaving Paris on his way homewards, he found himself sitting between two British subjects, a big man and a fat woman, dimly remembered. The place where he met them was the *salle à manger* of the hotel where he was. He remembered them when they spoke, because both had travelled with him when he first saw, in their various and varying characters, Twerleby, the General Foreigner and Fetherhed. Both remembered him and both began to speak almost at the same time, but the man, who had the louder voice, was heard first.

"Surely," said he, "I have had the pleasure of seeing you before. Yes, of course. We were travelling from London together, when that little chap from nowhere preached up cremation and the rest. I found out afterwards who you were and all about you, I did. Blastmore is an old friend of mine."

"And I," said the fat woman, "was at school with his sister, and I remember that journey from London so well, and what you said to my foolish niece, Penelope, who calls herself strong-minded."

"I remember her advising you to sit under Mr. Nohell," said Oswald.

"And I," said the big man, "remember the chap who

wanted to have everyone cremated. By the bye, Blastmore wrote me word the other day that he's a Catholic now, and never swears. When I read *that*, I said to myself, 'Never swears? Ben Blastmore never swears? There *must* be something in it. I'll enquire.' And so I did—and now I'm what you call a papist, ma'am."

"Well, do you know?" said the fat woman, "as to that, I don't think as I did before I met this gentleman; but I couldn't go so far."

"But suppose you can't get to the right place without?" said the big man.

"I have my own church, and everything that I can want," said she.

"Plenty to choose from, eh? So you'd have in a shop full of plated teapots. That won't do, ma'am. You haven't got the genuine thing."

"I had better leave them at it," thought Oswald. "That burly talk is more likely to hit home than anything that I could say."

This was true, so far; but Oswald, nine months before, swept away the impeding prejudice that hitherto had closed the question. When he went away, to pack up and begin his journey homewards, the big man profited thereby in his own fashion, till at last he said with a burly smile,

"Now then, ma'am, what have you got to say against it?"

"Well, to be sure," said the fat woman, "who would ever have thought that I should come to this? But God knows best."

"That's it, ma'am," said the big man. "And He's told you what you have to do: and you'll have to do it, now that you *do* know, or you'll go where you wouldn't like to go."

Oswald was then driving away in a fiacre, and so was someone else—a man with grey hair, a bushy beard and a red face, who had been making enquiries at the hotel and reading the names of the people staying there. When Oswald began to go, the enquiring man did likewise; and when Oswald was on the platform, looking for the unlikely chance of an empty carriage, the same man was just behind him.

"A professional patriot," thought Oswald: and then he thought no more about him, but happening to find an empty carriage, threw himself into a corner of it, trying in vain to

think of the Pearl as a friend, as the daughter of Malmaines, as herself separately, as a woman to be admired for heroic qualities—in short, as herself apart from himself in relation to her, and yet not apart from his complete appreciation of her, just as she was in every way. But she, just as she was in every way, could only be herself as he had loved her, as he did love her, and as he must love her while he rightly could.

After many futile attempts, he simply resigned himself to the will of God, and prayed for strength in his extremity.

In the meanwhile, the steaming train rolled along the rails at its usual pace, till it stopped somewhere, he knew not where, nor when. The carriage-door was opened, and a man came in.

“The professional patriot!” thought Oswald. “Why has he got in here, after choosing another carriage, and travelling so far without coming into this, until at the last moment?”

The man sat down nearly opposite to him, straightened a crumpled newspaper and began to read it. The train moved on. Oswald, half closing his eyes, as if he were sleepy, kept them sufficiently open to be of opinion that his fellow traveller wore a wig, that the wig and the face did not accord, and that probably the beard was false.

“This man,” he thought, “means mischief. He is disguised and he has dogged me. Yes. It *must* be that same—”

At this moment, the man, while apparently taking a pocket-handkerchief from the breast pocket of his coat, pulled out a small dagger, and used it with such practised skill that, if Oswald had not jumped up and aside when the assassin's fingers touched the handkerchief, the dagger would have been sheathed in his heart. The man, frightened, enraged at his own failure and fearing the consequences, sprang up and made a desperate plunge, missed his footing on the unsteady floor of the carriage, and so missed his aim. This was Oswald's one opportunity. It enabled him to grip the dagger, loosen the assassin's fingers and hurl him backwards into the far corner. The shock loosened the wig and misplaced the bushy beard, while Oswald, on the spur of the moment, seized the beard and rubbed off the red surface of a painted face. The

result was that the General Foreigner appeared then and there as himself.

"I don't want this, and you mustn't have it," said Oswald, throwing the dagger out of the window. "Don't do it a third time, because I might be under the painful necessity of defending myself in a way that would be fatal to you. Let this be a lesson to you. God has saved you, by your slip on the floor, from committing one murder at least, and given you one more opportunity of repentance. Don't refuse that. It may be your last."

The General Foreigner sat sullenly silent, his head bent, his eyes down. And so they travelled on mile after mile along a flat country, over which the moon was rising. After some time the train went slowly and more slowly, as if approaching a station. The General Foreigner raised his eyes and looked out. The train was then going at the rate of about ten miles an hour, and Oswald was saying to himself, "We must part company at the next place;" when without any previous movement his fellow-traveller opened the door, stood for an instant on the steps, and leaped out where there was a bank within leaping distance, grassy and not steep. This was feasible in itself: but he lost his presence of mind, and sprang before he could get a firm footing to spring from. His feet slipped, while a jolt of the train swung him down and under it, crushing him in its course. Oswald, who was then on his feet and by the door, but too late to prevent the result, shuddered at the sight, and the soft but awful shake that followed. He felt himself passing over the mangled corpse of, it was to be feared, a finally impenitent man; and he knew that it was lying somewhere across the rails, to be carried away and buried somehow, and then, decomposing into its elements, await its hideous reunion with a lost soul.

When the train drew up at the platform he called a porter, and said, "A man threw himself out of this carriage just now, so suddenly that I was not able to save him. You will find the body a little way back. If you wish to know my name, I will give you my card: but I could only repeat what I have told you. Here are two things of his."

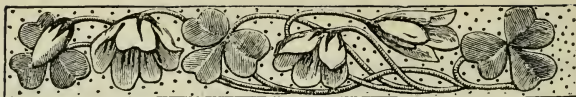
The porter shrugged his shoulders, took the wig and the false beard, and went his way without the card. Two

passengers came in, talking about theatres in Paris: and then, after the usual bustle, the train went on. Oswald thought of Twerleby and of the Baroness and of Lady RosSDen—the three people who had crossed his path with fatal effect.

“Lady RosSDen,” he thought, “is not malicious. She has been a tool and a victim. But the other two are formally bad—Twerleby the worst, because the Baroness had more temptation, and showed more human feeling, if she is not the most consummate actress that ever was in real life. Will they too, go on to the hideous finality, self-destroyed, self-judged, self-condemned?”

He shuddered again, because a hopeful answer occurred not.





CHAPTER LXXVI.



HEN Oswald Bramsby arrived at Hunterscombe, he found there the following letter from Mrs. Fetherhed :

Dear Mr. Bramsby,

You were the preserver of my life ; all that depended on saving it then I owe to you.

To you, who are one of the dearest of my friends, I owe, by the mercy of God, my hope of salvation, and my happiness in this world. Therefore I hope you will let me do something for you now when I can. You must come here (to Maplethorpe) as soon as you have read this. Margaret Malmaines has been most cruelly deceived about you—deceived in such a way that she had no choice in believing what she did. She knows all now. If you do not come at once, you will not be yourself, but quite someone else. Come without any delay.

Yours most truly and gratefully,

Gertrude Mary Fetherhed.

While he was reading this, he turned very pale, and read it again. Then he ordered the dog-cart, had his portmanteau put into it, and opened another letter, which ran thus :

My dear Bramsby,

A codicil to Malmaines' will has been found. You will hear all about that ; but the upshot is that you are the lineal male heir of the man who was turned out by Brian Malmaines ; and therefore by virtue of this codicil, you are the rightful owner of Maplethorpe.

In haste,

Yours very truly,

Henry Melford.

“Nonsense!” muttered Oswald. “And if it were true, what of that? If she is to me what I now hope, that property might in law belong to either: and if not, I certainly would not have it.”

He then hurried away to the stables, and after verifying the portmanteau, drove off by the nearest way to Maplethorpe. The nearest way was nineteen miles and a little more; while the greater part of the road was considered by the natives to be “rather middling.”

If, as is commonly supposed, the passing of time seems quick when we are happy, and slow when we are sorrowful, there ought to be some special seeming for the state of happiness in hope and the act of hurrying after it. The time ought to be, as it were, a protracted moment, whose length is felt but not measured. However this may be, certain it is that to Oswald the time was monotonously marked, until he found himself in the library at Maplethorpe, just after sunset. The Pearl was not there, but Gertrude Fetherhed was.

“I knew that you would come,” she said. “Of course you would.”

“Yes,” said he, “of course I would, being able; and of course I came at once, as soon as I had read your letter. I came here to thank you, and to know—”

“And I,” said Gertrude, “am here to make known what you wish to know, ought to know, shall know. Your course is clear. Listen to me. They told her certain facts, and in telling, put you for another man—a man who (I tell you in confidence, for you have a right to know it) was Mr. Twerleby; and they brought up the Paris terminus and the little bathing place near Hunterscombe as proof. Do you understand me?”

“I do,” he said. “No wonder she cut me.”

“I told her so, when she was reproaching herself bitterly for having ever believed it. But that was not all. The Baroness Diabolouski, in a letter to Lady Rosuden, represented you, *totidem verbis*, as having proposed to herself; but you don’t know how she got up circumstantial evidence of it. Do you remember writing down on a half sheet of paper those lines from the *Vita Nuova*, beginning with, *Io sento sì d’amor la gran possanza*, and finding it gone from the writing-table? Well, the Baroness Diabolouski

brought it out of her pocket afterwards, declaring that you had addressed the lines to her. I have seen them myself. How could the Pearl of Maplethorpe (and a most suitable name for her it is) do otherwise than believe this story until I undeceived her,—with such evidence, and you keeping out of her way, though you couldn't have done otherwise as things were? When I undeceived her about it, she was like one who awakes from a hideous dream, but still is in darkness. You surely must see the meaning of that. Of course you do, and of course you will act accordingly. *She* can't do anything about it. You know that. You must see her *now*. Stay here, while I bring her."

"I will," he said: and after a while the Pearl was there. Both were very pale, but not nervous, because nervousness implies a doubt of some sort, and they had none.

"I think," he said, "that we now know the truth—you about the stories told of me, and I about your just reasons for cutting me near the ford. You were powerless against these made-up appearances, and so was I against their unavoidable results. But we understand each other now about that—do we not?"

"Yes, we do," said the Pearl. "But the difference is that I know you to be a hero, and you know me to be—"

"What you are," said Oswald. "What I know you to be, and what you now are more than ever. For my sake, if not for your own, do not condemn yourself about that misunderstanding; for, if you do, you will condemn me. I knew more or less how you were surrounded, and I ought to have—"

"But how could you?" she said. "And how could I have told you?"

"True! but I ought at least—"

"No, you ought not. I won't hear it. Remember too, as against me, that you had saved my life."

"Yes; but my happening to do so would not have entitled you to condone such an infamous action as that of which I was accused. A man who could do that would not be a fit person for you to know."

"But why did I believe it? And why did I afterwards believe the other monstrous and ridiculous and quite incredible story?"

"Because you had no way of knowing how those lines

that I copied out of the *Vita Nuova* for Fetherhed came into the possession of the Baroness Diabolouski. May I see them?"

"Yes, here they are," said she. "I keep them as evidence against myself."

Oswald looked at them, and said, "I, on the contrary, find them the clearest proof that you could not, under the circumstances, have believed otherwise than as you did. I am certain of it. Will you believe me?"

"Yes, I will. I believe it, because you tell me so. I always did believe you, till that wicked person, or wicked people—I don't know which, and I don't wish to know—falsified everything."

"Do you really mean all that?" he said. "And may I now fully believe in it—rest on it?"

"Yes, you *must* believe that."

"Must I? then I do," said he, "on your word, and your word only, not caring for the word of anyone else."

"Yes, you must. I fell into total disbelief, when I was made to disbelieve you, who first gave me—I hardly know how—the idea of that belief by which I can say *Credo*."

"Then," said Oswald, "I may speak at last, and hear the final answer that will make or mar the happiness of my future life in this world. If I am mistaking you—"

"You are not mistaking me," said the Pearl. "Could I say more?"

"No, you could not. May I understand you to mean it, as I mean, when I say again that your final answer would make or mar the happiness of my future life in this world?"

"Yes, you may," said the Pearl. "I mean as you mean."

She spoke with solemn emphasis, and though her voice trembled, her utterance was firm. He looked up and looked into her eyes.

"Let me then express my meaning," he said, "express it in the clearest words. When I saw you first at the Hunt Ball at Osmundsbury—not knowing you, and, though it was in my own county, not expecting to know you ever, because I was a stranger in the county where my ancestors had lived before any of these modern families were in it,—I felt that, if I were ever to love any woman, as it was in me to love, it would be you, and no one else, no one else possibly. The beautiful dream vanished; and after a while I met you at the ford, and went on to Maplethorpe. I loved you after

that, more and more intensely, and I love you now, if possible, more than ever,—so much, that my happiness in this world depends in your giving me the right to love you always as my own, as my wife.”

The Pearl put her hand in his without speaking, while a beautiful blush, like the hue of a blush rose, came and went.

“Yes, always as your own,” she said, “*as your wife*. I promise it before God, who has granted to me, unworthy as I am, the two things that I longed for and despaired of—the light of faith, and the immense happiness of giving myself to you. It *is* so immense that I—”

She burst into tears, and for a few moments was unable to speak. He bent over her and kissed her forehead, which was quite cold.

“We are happy, now,” he said. “Oh how happy! But the reaction has been too much for both of us. I feel it so. My own darling Margaret, my Pearl—our troubles are over. I can tell you now, what I would not have told until I had heard that precious ‘yes’ from your lips. Your father did me the honour to express in the clearest words to me, when you were in Rome, that, if *you* would consent, our marriage would please him. He said so to me one evening. We had been riding together at Maplethorpe, and he had asked me to try the horse that he had bought for you.”

“The horse,” said she, “that I have been riding ever since—that I was riding when I turned away from *you*! But that is past, and my father has been praying for us. I know he has, and we are happy at last. He wrote the same thing to me in that letter that was lost, and found by *Suprême*. Did you hear of the missing codicil?”

“Yes, in a note from Melford,” said Oswald. “But it can’t be true.”

“It is true.”

“Be it so then. It will always be yours nevertheless.”

“No—ours. But there is more for you to hear about that, and about other things, than I can tell you just now. The Bishop will be here soon. He will say Mass to-morrow in the restored chapel. Your uncle is here, as you know. He came for it. I want you to see Aunt Julia now. She has changed very much.”

They found Lady Rossden in the small room opening

out of the library; and there too, they found (*mirabile dictu*) Father Bramsby, to whom she was talking as confidentially as if he had been Mr. Oldchurch. When Oswald came in, she greeted him warmly; and when she had quickly understood by instinct why he was there with the Pearl, her greeting was warmer.

"I am so glad to see you," she said, "and apologize for all my rudeness. I am quite ashamed of it."

"You must leave that to the inventors of the story," said Oswald.

"I was so afraid," said she, "that you might fall in with that dreadful man somewhere abroad, and be murdered."

"I did fall in with him in a railway carriage, and he fell out with me, though he never spoke."

"Good gracious! what happened?"

"No harm to me, for here I am: but his end was awful. He jumped out and caught his feet in the step. I saw him crushed under the wheels."

"Very awful!" said Lady Rossden. "But—you know, my dear Margaret, he never would have been safe with that man about."

"That's a fact," said Fetherhed, coming in expansively. "It's best as it is, for everyone except himself: and he *would* have it so. The other two—"

But his wife, who had come in with him, whispered "Don't," and the Pearl said to Father Bramsby:

"I must openly confess a scruple. The restitution of which my father spoke in the codicil is now made: but I lose nothing, gain everything."

"You are not responsible for what your ancestor did," said Father Bramsby, "nor can you restore property to heirs who are dead. You have done all that you could. No one can do more. You must put away that scruple."

"I will," said the Pearl, taking out her watch. "And now I must be in readiness to receive the Bishop."

CHAPTER THE LAST.

THE END AND THE BEGINNING.



HAVING followed Oswald and the Pearl through the tempests that had tried them for so many months, and seen them safely in port, we have little more to remark, because the rest of their lives is in the future, and happiness, as such, is uneventful. The wedding was to be at Osmundsbury, the honeymoon at Maplethorpe. The latter arrangements, though quite contrary to custom, suited both, because neither of them could perceive the advantage of hurrying away from the wedding breakfast to be pelted with old shoes, and encounter the bustle of a journey by railway.

Lady Rossden was *in statu quo*, and so was Sir Henry Melford. Fetherhed was as happy as he had always been since he was happily married. Mr. Blastmore was satisfied with everyone around him, and rejoiced continually at having been present at the expulsion of the Pearl's enemies from Maplethorpe.

In the latter days of October, two marriages were solemnized in the Catholic Church at Osmundsbury. Oswald was married to the Pearl, Monica to Suprême. They were married by the Bishop. Monica objected to a wedding tour, and Suprême was of one mind with her.

"What's the use of spending money to sit with my hands before me?" said Monica.

"What for should we go?" said Suprême. "We shall be happy at Maplethorpe. What should we desire of more?"

This was just what Oswald and the Pearl had said in other words; and indeed their happiness was complete, with every prospect of lasting through their lives, under the condition that our life here is a struggle. This condition is so evident that more words about it would be too much, for Peter the Lombard says in his "Book of Sentences," *In re aperta vitanda est longitudo sermonis*.

A BRIEF SKETCH OF
THE LIFE, FAMILY AND LABOURS
OF
EDWARD HENEAGE
DERING
OF BADDESLEY CLINTON



LONDON AND LEAMINGTON
Art and Book Company



A BRIEF SKETCH OF
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OF
EDWARD HENEAGE DERING,
OF BADDESLEY CLINTON,
AUTHOR OF THIS BOOK.

CHAPTER I.

. . . Of classes known to me in England, the aristocracy, with the perfection of human politeness, its continual grace of bearing and of acting, steadfast honour, light address and cheery stoicism, if you see well into it, is the best.

Thomas Carlyle.

IN the periodical called "Truth," (the number published on the 3rd of December, 1892,) occurs the following paragraph :

"The late Mr. Dering, of Baddesley Hall, Warwickshire, who died last week, was very popular in his county. He served in the Guards for a short time, but spent most of his life at Baddesley, supervising the management of his estate, and amusing himself with literary and artistic pursuits. He was a man of remarkable culture, and had no taste whatever for country sports. Mr. Dering, who belonged to one of the most ancient families in England, was a Tory of the most old-fashioned type."

This description, as far as it goes, is "truth." But the last sentence requires some distinction.

Mr. Dering was born at Pluckley, in Kent. He was the second son of the Reverend Cholmeley Edward Dering, who was the rector of that place, although his great wish had been to go into the army. The Duke of York offered to give him a commission in the Guards, as a recognition of his father's services during the rebellion in Ireland, A.D. 1798, where he commanded a cavalry regiment which he, Colonel Cholmeley Dering, had himself raised in 1794, for which he received the thanks of the King and of both Houses of Parliament. This regiment was called the New Romney Fencibles. But his son was an only child. In obedience to the wishes of both his parents, the young Cholmeley Edward Dering gave up his own inclination, and went to Oxford, where he greatly distinguished himself in classics.

At an early age he was presented with the living of Pluckley by Archbishop Manners Sutton; for though on the Dering estates, it was not in their gift. Like his ancestor, another Edward Dering, he was, besides being the Rector of Pluckley, Prebend of St. Paul's and one of the Queen's Chaplains. He was Chaplain to George III., George IV., William IV., and Queen Victoria.

He lived in the old rectory house after he had the living; and there his eldest son was born. It stood in the village of Pluckley. It was much out of repair, so Mr. Dering pulled it down, exchanging the land on which it stood for the present glebeland, and there the new house, built by him, now stands. The grounds were laid out by Mr. Dering also. The old land was exchanged with the Surrenden estate. The whole of Pluckley village belongs to Sir Edward Dering.

The old church of Pluckley, beneath which rest so many generations of Derings for six hundred years and more,

is close to the Surrenden Avenue, which is nearly a mile in length and leads directly to the House. The park gates in the other direction are in the parish of Little Chart.

Cholmeley Dering, his father, was uncle and guardian to the present head of the house, Sir Edward Cholmeley Dering, and lived at Surrenden-Dering during the minority of his nephew. It was in the long gallery at Surrenden Dering (a view of which is annexed) that Edward Heneage, being a very delicate child, was christened soon after his birth. This gallery—Elizabethan, like the rest of the house—is a hundred feet long, and commands beautiful views of the undulating Park, and beyond, over the Weald of Kent. The childhood and youth of Edward Heneage Dering were passed near this old home of his ancestors ; and his love for the woods of Surrenden, for the Park with its fine old trees, its red and fallow deer, the far-stretching landscape over the beautiful Weald to the distant blue horizon, influenced his tastes and feelings all his life. Dreamy and poetic in his nature, he retained the heart of a child, almost without passing through the phase of boyhood, until at seventeen he became a man and entered the army. He served first in the 68th Light Infantry, commanded by Lord William Paulet, for about twelve months, when he received the commission in the Coldstream Guards, promised by the late Duke of Cambridge, and joined the regiment in London.

Five years afterwards he spent his leave of absence in Rome and Naples. While at the former place, one wet and stormy day, he met the Blessed Sacrament being carried to the sick. Impelled by an unspeakable awe, regardless of mud and rain, he knelt down in the road as It passed. He then knew nothing of Catholicism ; and, as he often said, Italy, and especially Rome, is a puzzling problem in these days, to those who are outside the household of the Faith. His religion at that time was

vague and undefined, for he was too logical to be satisfied with the contradictions in the views of the Establishment ; and although among the greatest friends and nearest neighbours of his childhood were the Darrells of Cale-hill, and though the golden-haired Olivia Darrell was his particular friend and playmate, yet religion was, for obvious reasons, not mentioned between the children, nor alluded to by the good Benedictine Priest, Father Ryan, for whom he had a reverent affection all his life, and to whom he wrote directly he was received into the Church.

The early death of his beautiful little friend, Olivia, soon after she went out to Brazil as a Sister of Charity, made a great impression on him ; and his longing to find the truth, if it were to be found, grew with his years.

Visiting Italy again during his long leave in 1856-7 and returning from Naples to Rome, he incautiously rode across the Campagna one evening after sunset, and caught the malaria fever. This took such hold on his constitution that he could not entirely shake it off : attacks came back again and again, so that, depressed in health and spirits, and disliking to inconvenience his brother officers by being so often absent on sick leave, he resigned his commission in the Guards.

Henceforth he devoted himself more entirely to the study of music, which he had already cultivated in Italy. He had a sweet and most musical voice—a baritone with the quality of a tenor ; and he modelled himself on the style of the old Italian school—the school of Rubini and Mario—under the careful tuition of Perugini. When a child, he was often taken to the opera by his parents, and, when he returned home, was frequently heard to play on the piano or sing the melodies to which he had then listened for the first time. He heard Rubini sing in *Lucia*, and many a time he delighted his friends by going through on the piano the last scenes of that opera.

Often too, in the twilight or in the evenings, when the mood came upon him, he used, in later years, to improvise on the piano the most delightful melodies and nocturnes. But he never would take the trouble to write them down. He said that he had not studied the science of music enough to do so, and that the brief life of man is too short to be devoted to the study of more than one art or science. He preferred to devote that life of his to what he believed to be most useful, in his own line of literature, to his fellow countrymen.

In the month of January, 1858, two years after leaving the Guards, he was singing one evening at an amateur concert given by Lady Garvagh. Among the guests, delighted with his music, was one distinguished in London society for her grace and charm, no less than for her attainments intellectual and artistic. This was Georgiana Lady Chatterton.

“Etre belle sans jalousie,
Etre femme sans coquetterie—
Bien parler sans le vouloir,
Bien juger sans le savoir,”

describes her well, in the old lines addressed to La Vallière.

He met her afterwards several times at private concerts given by Emma Lady Petre, Lord and Lady Harrington, at Harrington House, and many other places; and finally they were married at St. George's, Hanover Square, on the 1st of June, 1859. They spent a week's honeymoon at Woolston Hall, in Essex, lent to them by Miss Bodle, (an interesting old house, of which two interiors with tapestry, sketched by Mrs. Ferrers, are to be seen at Baddesley Clinton,) and then returned to their house, 5, Seamore Place, Mayfair, where their receptions, musical and otherwise, notably children's afternoon dances, were very

popular. At their house many literary celebrities were to be met, as well as others, in the London of those days, who were distinguished for cultivation and refinement. But, as Heneage Dering often said, the happiness then enjoyed in his marriage, made him long more than ever to find the Truth; for without the assurance of permanence and of immortality that the true Religion alone can give, no living soul, created by God in His image, can find peace. With these aspirations his wife entirely sympathized, and he has expressed it in the dedication of a novel published after her death,—*Freville Chase* :

IN MEMORIAM.

I dedicate this book to my wife, Georgiana Lady Chatterton, because I have tried to express in it some higher motives of action, that I learnt from her and first saw realized in her life.

Perceiving his talent for literature, she had, on their first acquaintance, persuaded him to write. His first book was *Lethenillier*, of which the publisher's reader, Mr. Williams, said that it contained enough matter and brilliant writing to form three novels of the usual kind.

From that time the course of his reading was directed to the one object of finding the Truth, and he, even then, began to read the *Summa*. With the keenness and power of his acute intellect, he unravelled the sophistries with which infidel writers had sought to obscure the truth, and at last was received into the Church by Cardinal—then Doctor—Newman, who, with his well-known charity for souls, and aware of the mental struggles endured, had travelled into Kent for that purpose. Mr. Dering, his wife, and her niece by marriage (afterwards Mrs. Ferrers) were conditionally baptized on St. Matthew's Day, Sept. 21, 1865.

They were then at Finchden, their small summer residence. It was a quaint timbered house, black and white,

with grotesquely carved gables, formerly belonging to the Finch family, and prior to that (such was the tradition) to the Blessed Thomas More. An old mulberry tree in the garden was shown as his.

In the winter of that year Mr. Dering wrote a novelette called *Florence Danby*, which was much admired, published by Richardson of Derby in 1868;* and also a volume of poems, called *The Chieftain's Daughter*.† The year previously he and Lady Chatterton had rented a place belonging to a cousin of hers, Smedmore, in Dorsetshire: and the beauty and attractiveness of the Isle of Purbeck (strongly associated as it is with the memories of our Saxon Kings) Mr. Dering expressed in the lines following:

ON THE ISLE OF PURBECK.

Great Land-marks here are wound through little space,
 Half circled by the sea,
 'Mid such tranquillity
 As most in scenes most pastoral doth hold its place.

A double range of hills, as with a fence
 Of nature's own device,
 With one sole orifice
 Shuts in the sloping valley's half circumference.

Large pastures there are sloping down the Vale
 In undulations green
 With winding lanes between;
 And high upon the hill that fronts the southern gale.

* It is witty and interesting and full of profound knowledge of human nature. It is still to be had and is published in one vol. 4s.

† These poems, containing many beautiful and deep thoughts combined with grace of diction, are now sold by the Art and Book Co., London and Leamington, and Benziger Brothers, New York. 1s. 6d. sewed, 1s.

Wild heath, outstretching far behind the lines
 Of semi-circling hills,
 A wide expanse full fills,
 And with the deep blue distance far away combines.

 Small bays between brown cliffs, bays blue and clear,
 Homesteads in meadows green,
 With many gates between,
 And hanging woods in shade, their varied forms uprear.

 Within the arc of hills a soft repose,
 As if from bygone days,
 Enslaves the sympathies,
 And unto local love affection doth dispose.

Mr. Dering made it a rule never to describe real living people in his books, but the scene of one of his most popular novels, *The Lady of Raven's Combe*, describes the Isle of Purbeck. Peveridge Bay is Kimmeridge Bay; Encombe is Raven's Combe, &c. But the story itself and some details of landscape have nothing to do with local or history traditions.

The remainder of Mr. Dering's life, up to 1876, is best told in his published memoirs of Georgiana Lady Chatterton. In that year she died,—suddenly, on the night of the 6th of February. He suffered dreadfully from her loss—even to the endangering of health and nerves; but the consolations of religion came to his aid. He continued to live at Baddesley Clinton.

Though a different type of man in character and tastes from Marmion Edward Ferrers, Heneage Dering loved and admired the “old Squire” (as he was lovingly called) with the affection of a brother, and took a personal interest in all that concerned him. Seeing that the old estate of his friend had suffered so much for the Faith, partly in fines and confiscations, partly in the fact that many properties were left away from its owners out of the right line, because of religion, Mr. Dering devoted his energy and fortune to its recovery. He

sacrificed a large part of his income to redeem it and pay off all its mortgages, which in the disastrous years of agricultural depression (nowhere more keenly felt than in the Midlands) must otherwise have swamped the whole estate. He also restored or rebuilt all the cottages; put all the farmhouses in complete—even ornamental—repair, as is now to be seen; drained, improved and reclaimed the land; planted new plantations on waste ground and renewed the old ones, besides other benefits too many to enumerate here. Finally, he re-entailed it, thus unencumbered and repaired, on the nephew and heir of his friend.

Nor was all this, begun in the lifetime of Marmion Ferrers and completed afterwards, done *only* by reason of chivalrous affection for the owner, and for the sake of a beautiful old place and for all that it represents in this England of ours, the Dowry of Our Lady—once so Catholic. Devotion to religion underlaid all other thoughts. For the church and presbytery are also on the Baddesley Clinton estate, and the convent of Poor Clares, of which Mr. Dering (succeeding Marmion Ferrers in the office) was Father Syndic. For this community he had, like Marmion Ferrers a deep reverence and paternal care.

A short description of this old fortified house, taken from the *Birmingham Daily Gazette* of November 24th, 1892, may interest the reader in this place.

“Baddesley Clinton Hall, as is pretty well known, is one of the ‘show places’ of Warwickshire. It has a somewhat unique history. It has been in the possession of the Ferrers family for nearly 500 years, and during the whole of that long period has never been owned by a Protestant master. The Ferrers’s have remained true to the ancient Catholic faith through the long line of their descent, and through centuries of trouble and trial. Many convents and monasteries have been founded by them. Baddesley Clinton Church, nestling away there in the trees, a short distance from the

hall, was originally a Roman Catholic edifice, but in the days of the Reformation it was confiscated, and is now a Protestant place of worship. Over twelve generations of Ferrers sleep within its ancient walls. Baddesley Hall, the inheritance of the Ferrers family, is a singularly well preserved specimen of the moated manor house of the fifteenth century. It occupies a secluded site within a thickly-timbered park, and forms three sides of a quadrangle. It is entirely surrounded by a wide and clear moat, crossed at the entrance by a comparatively modern bridge leading to an embattled tower, with a wide depressed archway, above which is a large mullion window. The massive old oak door, with its primitive fastenings, is still in use. The hall has a richly carved chimney-piece of white freestone, and the walls of empanelled oak are well nigh hidden from view by rare paintings of Vandyck, Rubens, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Rembrant, &c. The windows are emblazoned with heraldic designs of the Ferrers family. The first floor, including the tower, forms a banqueting room, and the private chapel adjoining has been richly decorated, much of the work in that and other parts of the house being from the hands of Mrs. Dering herself, she being an artist of considerable ability."

The learned and well known antiquary, the Rev. Henry Norris, of Tamworth, wrote an interesting account of the old estate, called, "Baddesley Clinton, its Manor, Church and Hall." It is now out of print, but a second edition is in preparation by the cultivated historian, which we hope will soon see the light.

When Mr. Dering became a Catholic in 1865, he began to study Catholic philosophy, and to acquaint himself with the writings of the great St. Thomas of Aquin. He studied not only the works of the Angelic Doctor, but various writers, defensive and explanatory, such as Liberator, Cornoldi and others. The learned Dominican, Dr.

King, who spent an afternoon at Baddesley Clinton, driven over from Kenilworth by the late much lamented and beloved Bishop Amherst, introduced him furthermore to the works of Cardinal Zigliara.

Mr. Dering published, in 1880, *Freville Chase*, a very popular novel, the second of the Atherstone Series; *Sherborne*, being the first, was published in 1875. Of this book (*Freville Chase*), the venerable Archbishop Ullathorne wrote :

“It is strong and beautiful and very pregnant with pointed instruction. . . The pathos of the concluding chapters is exquisite.”

In the winters of 1881-2 he wrote *The Lady of Raven's Combe*, the third of the Atherstone Series. The character of Crayston is one of the most powerful of Mr. Dering's delineations or, so to say, creations, and caused great amusement to Marmion Ferrers. The novel was first published in *The Month*.

On the 25th of August, 1884, took place the lamented death of Marmion Edward Ferrers. The following notice appeared in *The Tablet* :—

“We regret to announce the death of Mr. Marmion Edward Ferrers, of Baddesley Clinton, J.P. and D.L. for Warwickshire. Though he had been ailing for some time, his departure was at last sudden, but there was time for him to be fortified with the rites of religion. Mr. Ferrers was the head of a family that had been noble for nearly a thousand years, uniting in himself its different branches as heir-general and heir-male. Had it not been for the Bill of Attainder passed in the Barons' wars, he would have been premier earl, with the title of Earl of Derby. He was also senior co-heir to the Baronies of De Ferrers of Chartley, Bassett of Drayton, Louvaine, Bouchier and Compton. His family remained constant to the ancient Faith of England, through the long line of its

descent and through the centuries of persecution ; many convents and monasteries were founded by them in the past. As to Mr. Ferrers himself, he cannot be pourtrayed more exactly than in the words of a distinguished author. Mr. Mallock, speaking of a character described in one of his books, writes as follows : ‘ He was an entirely honest gentleman of ancient lineage—a perfectly beautiful type of what the English squire properly ought to be. For he lived upon his own land, and amongst his own people, and was a complete and lovely example to them of a life, quite simple indeed, but in the highest sense loyal, noble and orderly. He saw it was altogether a nobler thing for a man to be brave and chivalrous than it is to be fashionable, and looked forward to remember on his dying day the human souls that he had saved alive, rather than the pheasants that he had shot dead.’ Mr. Ferrers was the eldest son of Edward Ferrers, of Baddesley Clinton, and Lady Harriett Townshend, his wife, born at Bristol on the 13th October, 1813, and died on the evening of Monday, August 25th, 1884. R.I.P. ”

Mr. Ferrers had, in the last three years of his life, suffered from severe attacks of liver and rheumatic gout, but the last short attack of illness was only of a few hours duration. Father Fairfax, anxiously waited for all day, arrived at five o’clock that sad Monday afternoon. They had been at Baddesley school together. This school was near the site of the present convent, and was under the tuition of the Franciscan Fathers. On the first day of Marmion’s going to school, a little boy of eight, Francis Fairfax, then some years older, had carried back on his shoulder the little Ferrers, overtired with a long walk : and now, sixty-two years afterwards, he arrived just in time to give his priestly help and consolation to his old school-fellow. At half-past seven on the evening of Monday, August 25th, with no pain, and with a look of peace and



joy on his countenance, the holy soul of Marmion Edward Ferrers passed into that Life for which he had long made preparation.

Long before, he had, in concert with Lady Chatterton and by her express wish, chosen and marked out a little square of ground near the Convent Church, as the future burial-place of him and his, and selected a tall marble cross to hold many names, so that they might rest under its shadow. The claims of family descent vanish with all earthly things, when man, *quia pulvis est, in pulverem reverteretur*. Therefore the old Squire of Baddesley Clinton, true Christian as he was, desired not at all that his mortal remains should lie with his twelve generations of Ferrers's in the desolate Parish Church, once belonging to his ancestors. His injunction was that he should rest within sound of the *Sanctus* bell, near the holy place where the adorable sacrifice of the Mass is daily offered, and where the daughters of St. Clare pray night and day for the living and the dead.

On the death of the Squire, the Reverend Joseph Kelly came to reside at Baddesley Clinton, where he said Mass in the domestic chapel on Sundays and three other days in the week, giving Mr. Dering and Mrs. Ferrers all these great blessings and benefits. But at the expiration of a year and a half, he thought he ought to return to more active duties, being recruited in health by his interval of rest from missionary work. Accordingly he returned to Warwick in the spring of 1886, soon after the marriage of Mr. Dering and Mrs. Ferrers. Of this event Mr. Dering wrote, as follows, to the Bishop of Birmingham, Dr. Ullathorne :

My dear Lord,

As I cannot find it in me to let anything that much concerns us here be known by anyone sooner than by yourself, and inasmuch as the duties bequeathed to me by the dead, in

the interests of the living, have necessitated an important step which, for reasons that will be evident to you, cannot be put off longer than custom would sanction, I prefer to write now, rather than to send my letter with the same post as others. You know what has been done, and by whom, and in what ways, to save this old Catholic property, put it in order and hand it down to one who will (I trust) carry on its traditions. You also know that with all the unremunerative outlays, which have been and still are quite unavoidable, it could not have been held together, if I had left the place when the dear good Squire died. But equally evident is it that, if Father Kelly had not been here, I could not have remained. And now I must either go, and leave Mrs. Ferrers to struggle for awhile, with the certainty of having to sell the place, or remain here as her husband: and we have decided accordingly. . . .

And to Mrs. Ferrers's brother he wrote:

My dear Edward,

I am going to tell you some news which, knowing all the circumstances, will not surprise you. Pysie is going to do me the honour of being my wife, and if we don't know each other sufficiently, who can ever know anyone?

But beyond that, and irrespective of ourselves, there are reasons why the step is imperative. . . . In fact I am, as you know, a necessity; she and the old place would be sacrificed, as well as the prospects of its heir; the wishes and hopes of the revered dead would also be frustrated, if I were to leave the place. . . . The marriage will be towards the end of September, at eight o'clock. There will be no one there except the small week-day congregation, and we shall not leave home. I don't know what the superstitious will say to our being dressed in black—black velvet both of us, and Pysie a black lace veil—we shall not even buy a new pair of gloves! It is only ten months since the death of my dearest mother. . . .

On a grey September morning, on St. Matthew's day, the 21st, 1885, the anniversary of their reception into the Church by Cardinal Newman, they went, accompanied by their nephew and niece, Mr. and Mrs. Ferrers, and the little Edward, to hear Mass at eight o'clock in the convent church at Baddesley Clinton, and after receiving Holy Communion together, were married by the Rev. Joseph Kelly.

By this marriage two families—of Ferrers and Dering—illustrious by antiquity and descent, were again connected. They had fought on opposite sides at the battle of Hastings, but in after times, many of the same quarterings were emblazoned in the arms of each, as may be seen in the shields on the walls of the private chapel and elsewhere, at Baddesley Clinton. Two royal brothers (sons of Edward the Third, from whom Edward H. Dering was 17th in descent) were among their ancestors; the Ferrers descending from Thomas of Woodstock, Duke of Lancaster, and the Derings from Lionel Plantagenet, Duke of Clarence.

It may interest lovers of heraldry to know that the sixty quarterings of the Derings show the descent from two lines of the "Kings of the English." From the Plantagenet line, as above, by intermarriage with an heiress, and in the male line from the still older race of the Saxon kings. St. Oswald, nephew of St. Edwin, is their progenitor. He was King of Deira (Northumberland); hence the family name of Dering, *ing* in Saxon signifying "descendants of." This descent goes still farther back,—to Wodin the Conqueror, who gives his name to Wednesday, worshipped by the heathen Saxons as a demigod, and who was the ancestor of their kings.

St. Oswald was, like St. Edwin, Bretwalda of all England, in other words chief and ruler over the Heptarchy, and as such had the winged globe, the Roman emblem of supreme dominion, carried before him. This is still

one of the crests of the Dering family, with the addition of a cross—no doubt added by St. Oswald. Their other crest is the black horse of Saxon times, with gold mane and tail, passant and standing on a ducal coronet.

When St. Oswald was slain by the heathen Penda at the battle of Oswestry (Oswald's tree), his young widow and little children fled into Kent, where they were hospitably received and protected by its king.

The name of Dering Miles, Dering the soldier, appears as witness in the royal charter, A.D. 880, by which King Ethelwulf gave lands in Cucolnstone to the Church in Rochester.* From Dering Miles to the Norman Invasion there were seven generations, the last of whom, Dering Fitz Syred, was killed at the battle of Hastings. His son, Syred Fitz-Dering de Chilham, was Lord of Farningham and died 1099. His son, Syred, married Lescelind de Morines, a Norman heiress. Their son, Norman Fitz-Dering, married another,—Blithildis, daughter and heir of William de Ypres, Earl of Kent; and he saved the life of King Stephen at the battle of Lincoln, shielding him with his own body until he fell, pierced with arrows. His son, Dering Fitz-Norman, in reward for this deed, was given the right to bear on his shield three *gouttes de sang*, in augmentation.

Sir Richard Dering, who died in 1397, was Lieutenant of Dover Castle. Norman Fitz-Dering succeeded St. Thomas of Canterbury as Archbishop in that see. The chroniclers of the time describe him as "a very prudent man." Another member of the family was Bishop of Wells, before that see was joined to Bath. Father Dering, a Benedictine monk of Canterbury, was among the first of the English martyrs. He was one of the five confessors of the Maid of Kent, and was offered his life on the scaffold

* See *Textus Roffensis*.

if he would acknowledge the King's supremacy over the Church of God.

Another Edward Dering, the Protestant Rector of Pluckley, had the temerity, in preaching before Queen Elizabeth, to describe her as a "sportive heifer;" whereat she relegated him to obscurity and denied him all church preferment, which was probably good for "his soul's health." A very beautiful old portrait of him on panel is at Surrenden Dering. There is a print of it at Baddesley Clinton, and on the back is written, in faded ink:

Edward Dering, . . . fellow of Christ College, Cambridge. He was a very eminent preacher at Court, in the reign of Elizabeth, and one of the preachers at St. Paul's. His principal works are the "Answer to Harding," his Lectures on the Epistle to the Hebrews, and his Sermons. He was Rector of Pluckley in the year 1568, but only continued there till the year 1570.

The happy death of this truly religious man was suitable to the purity and integrity of his life. Ob. 26th June, 1576. The picture from which this print is taken, is painted on panel, and is now at Surrenden Dering in the county of Kent, the seat of Sir Edward Cholmeley Dering, Baronet, a minor.

Hadlow, June 9, 1817.

Underneath the portrait is inscribed :

EDOVARDVS DERINGVS.

SEDULUS INCULCANS DIVINI SEMINA VERBI,
EXPERTS DERINGVS AMBITIONIS ERAT.

A. B.

No record has come down to us, to show how this ancient family was robbed of the faith of its forefathers.

As they do not possess an acre of Church land (the usual reward for submission to the State Church) and are not even patrons of the living of Pluckley, it must be supposed that in their case, in as many others, the heir was "got hold of" as a minor, and brought up in the "new learning." Certain it is that they have been noted for espousing the losing cause, whenever it appeared to them the right one: hence the old saying in Kent, that "*The Black horse of the Derings always has his head to the wind.*"

A good example of this saying is Sir Edward Dering of Surrenden Dering, the first baronet of the name, Warden of the Cinque Ports and Lieutenant of Dover Castle, a well-known character in the history of his time. He first espoused the parliamentary cause, in opposition to what he deemed the unjust exactions of Charles I. But when he found that opposition to the king was taking the form of rebellion, he would have nothing more to do with it. He went over to the king's party, and raised a regiment for him at his own expense. Surrenden Dering was sacked three times by the soldiers of Cromwell, and all the armour taken. Sir Edward himself had, on one occasion, a narrow escape. He was hidden by his wife in a small cupboard, and she, letting down her long hair, sat down before the glass. When the parliamentary officer, with his men, forced their way into the room, Lady Dering (she was a Tufton, of the family of the Earls of Thanet) stood behind the door, enveloped, it is said, in her luxuriant fair hair, and said, "I am sure no gentleman would enter a lady's room while she is dressing." Then, holding open the door, she added, "You can plainly see that Sir Edward Dering is not here." The officer, to his honour, retired and called off his men. In the cupboard in which she concealed Sir Edward was a sketch of her on wood, found when the house was restored. Sir Edward's portrait,

after Jansen, is to be seen at Baddesley Clinton.* He did not live to see the destruction of the royal cause. He died of starvation, during the king's lifetime, at one of his own farmhouses, where he had taken shelter, pursued by the troops of Cromwell.

He was a man of great cultivation and a very learned antiquary, being a contemporary of that Henry Ferrers, Lord of Baddesley Clinton for seventy years, so often quoted by Dugdale. This Henry Ferrers was eminently distinguished in the same line, and, like Sir Edward Dering, made learned collections of most valuable deeds and MSS. The Ferrers MSS. were retained by Dugdale and never returned to their owner. They passed through several hands, and were at last unfortunately destroyed by fire in Birmingham, with some valuable books of the Shakespeare library, about ten years ago.

A portrait of Sir Edward Dering's son, Sir Edward Dering, and of his grandson, also Sir Edward Dering, called the Black Devil of Kent, hangs in the hall at Baddesley Clinton; also one of his wife, Miss Cholmeley, —all painted by Sir Peter Lely and repliquas of those at Surrenden Dering. The origin of this *soubriquet*, "the Black Devil," given in joke (for he was by no means of evil repute or intent), is that, being a man of very dark complexion, with coal-black eyes and hair, and usually riding a black horse, a waggoner passing along one of the mud lanes in the Weald thus described him. Being asked if he had seen Sir Edward Dering, he said, "I don't know he, but a black devil on a black horse jumped over me, waggon and all, just now, as I was coming down this lane." In the same room also is a crayon drawing of the Countess of Strathmore, the celebrated Miss Bowes, and of her little daughter, Lady Maria Bowes-Lyon. Here we must recall

* The original is at Barham Court, one of the seats of George Dering, Esq., of Lockleys, Wellwyn, Hertfordshire.

to mind that, besides the pedigree already mentioned, Edward Heneage Dering was, by his mother, (the daughter of Barrington Price, and of Lady Maria Bowes-Lyon his wife,) also descended from kings of Wales and Scotland. His maternal grandfather Price, or Ap Reis, descended from the ancient line of British kings, had for his remote ancestor St. Helena, mother of Constantine the Great; and the Lyons, as is well-known, quarter the royal arms of Scotland, by reason of an intermarriage with a royal heiress. A picture of their ancient seat, Glamis Castle, of which so many legends are told, hangs in the drawing-room at Baddesley Clinton.

A Sir Edward Dering, 6th Baronet, when a young man, was one of the canopy bearers who carried the canopy over the King at the coronation of George III. The cloth of gold was made into two screens, which are to be seen at Baddesley Clinton, as well as one of its little gold bells which fell off. Sir Edward picked it up, and it was given to the young courtier as a memento by the King. The cloth of gold of the Coronation Canopy of George III. was divided amongst the canopy bearers according to custom. Sir Edward Dering was entitled to the office, as one of the Barons of the Cinque Ports.

His daughter-in-law, wife of the 7th Baronet, who always wore a habit, was called the "riding Lady Dering." She and Lady Salisbury were the two first ladies who rode in Hyde Park.

The heads of this family were offered a peerage more than once, and refused it. They might have said in the words of the old Frenchman, the Duc de Rohan, *Roy ne peut—Prince ne veut—Rohan suis.*

And now having brought down this brief sketch of an historical family to the present day, with such particulars as may be generally interesting, we return to the author of
THE BAN OF MAPLETHORPE.

Caricature of Keble.



CHAPTER II.

. "He
 To whom a thousand memories call
 As not being less, but more than all
 The gentleness he seemed to be.

So wore his outward best, and joined
 Each office of the social hour
 To noble manners, as the flower
 And native growth of noble mind ;

And thus he bore without abuse
 The grand old name of gentleman,
 Defamed by every charlatan
 And soiled with all ignoble use."

Lord Tennyson.

It was often remarked that the picturesque dress and appearance of "the Squire," habited in black velvet and knickerbockers, with the pointed hat of King Charles I.'s time, accorded exactly with Baddesley Clinton, its embattled tower and moat. Strangers or friends visiting there, while enjoying the tranquil refinement that surrounded him and was a part of him, felt, as they said, transported back into days long past, so that the restless nineteenth century, its cares and turmoils, were for a while forgotten.

This was said likewise of his predecessor ; but the description of Marmion Ferrers must be reserved for the book that is promised us from the cultivated pen of Father Norris.

Alike in their unlikeness, much that can be said of one is true of both,—simply because both were true Christians, and brought their true belief into their daily lives. Like

Marmion Ferrers, Edward Dering was joyous in disposition, keenly alive to wit and humour, delightful as a companion, and invariably so; even-tempered, prompt in acknowledging a fault, even to an inferior; singularly unselfish and mindful of others.

The anecdotes told of St. Oswald and St. Edwin by the Saxon Chroniclers recall to mind the character of their remote descendant. Like them, he was generous to his own disadvantage; chivalrous and gentle; strong-willed and persistent (his strength of will exercised first and most against himself), having great power of influence over natures of the higher type. His complexion was fair and pale; his eyes blue, darkening with emotion; his hair brown and curling, gold threaded in the sunlight; his nose aquiline; his forehead broad, calm and high. He was of middle height, firmly knit, formed for agility, grace and strength. Following the Angelic Doctor, whose character he loved to study, he was placid in argument, ready to be convinced by the logic of his adversary, but persistent in searching out and insisting fearlessly on the truth; for "human respect" was not in him.

His strong convictions (in which also he was of one mind with Marmion Ferrers) that a landlord is morally bound to live on his estates and care personally for the welfare of his people, are expressed in one of his short poems called "Lines on the Ruins of an old Manor House."

On yonder shadowed wall,
Dim life-scenes, past, and possible—some new,
Some old as human nature—cross my view,
While twilight's veil doth fall.

Within the solitude
That holds possession here, while bats flit by
But stay not, fancy conjures to the eye,
What others may have viewed.

Through selfish deeds well done,
 With strength that hero-worshippers applaud,
 Perchance the owners of these acres broad
 Have high position won ;

And lost it by neglect
 Of duty, such as benefits the doer—
 Such as the man, who would be fortune's wooer,
 Loves through his self-respect ;

Or on the flowing course
 Of quasi-vicious pleasure, conscience free,
 Or owing to self-careless chivalry
 That crossed the ruling force.

Contemporaries here
 Have thought and spoken of the nation's monuments,
 Grieved at their turns, or hailed them as improvements,
 Deeming themselves sincere.

Contemporaries gazed
 On beauty here—whose peeling portraits lie
 In brokers' rooms, before the careless eye
 Of wonder coldly raised.

Contemporaries met
 And loved that loveliness, and loving grew
 Towards good or ill, for oft on passion true
 Youth's turning-point is set.

These lands have long been bought—
 Some by a large proprietor remote,
 Some by an unknown stranger—for a vote ;
 Both absent and unsought.

Here, even as elsewhere
 In England's thoroughly cultivated land,
 The symptoms of non-residence expand
 Before perception there.

I see them in the fence
 Of growing facts around their treasured fame,
 Who lived here once—their memory can claim
 The fact of residence.

I see them in the line
 Of undesired sequences, that rise
 Sadly from masked beginnings, which men prize
 As were they things divine.

I turn me from these walls :
 The bats are fewer, and I see them not ;
 Their rushing wings disturb this lonely spot
 At wider intervals.

And as I turn away,
 The moon uprises slowly through the trees,
 The distant view grows clearer by degrees,
 Replete with harmony.

In the year 1885, Mr. Dering employed some weeks of illness and enforced leisure in writing an anonymous book called "In the Light of the XXth Century,"* by "Innominatus," which some of his friends consider to be one of his most talented and highly finished *chefs-d'œuvres*. Of it a learned Anglican clergyman, himself a distinguished author, wrote to the publisher :

Dear Mr. Hodges,

I have read "In the Light of the XXth Century" twice, with singular interest and profit, and value it highly. Many thanks for your gift.

It is evidently written by a true and sound philosopher, certainly a Christian with a good foundation ; possibly by a Catholic.

Its power is remarkable, its satire keen, its principles admirable.

The end of the hero's dream is nearer us in reality than some imagine. We are living upon a volcano, and shall no doubt suffer as a nation for casting off authority, and all that is involved in the same.

* "In the Light of the XXth Century," by Innominatus. Hodges, 1886, price 2s.

Of course the book appeals to the educated. The hits at restored Paganism, and the "pig and gutter" men and women are brilliant. I shall procure two copies and give them to those who may benefit by their perusal. . . .

At Malvern, in 1886, Mr. Dering heard from his friend Mr. Moody, several particulars touching Madame Blavatsky, which induced him to study Esoteric Buddhism; and he wrote two articles on it, which were published in *The Month*, and afterwards produced in a small book.* It produced a great effect in many minds, and shows the "Wisdom Religion," or the worship of the devil and witchcraft, fearlessly in its true colours. Another small but important work that year was a pamphlet called "The Philosopher of Rovereto." Though it only occupies sixteen pages, it is the result of profound study and labour. It was printed for the author by Messrs. Burns in 1888, and gives the key to the Rosminian System, which Mr. Dering shows to be the doctrine of Being. This doctrine Rosmini took, as he acknowledges, from the German transcendentalists, borrowing their weapons, in order to overthrow them with their own artillery. But this, Mr. Dering argues, was to attempt an impossibility. It is from the armoury of the Church that the weapons must be taken, if we would vanquish her enemies.†

Looking upon Philosophy to be, as he often said, the handmaid and doorkeeper of Theology, he was convinced that an extended knowledge of the teaching of the Angelic Doctor would do more than anything else for the conversion of England, and for the preservation of Catholic youth from the errors of the day. Therefore he wrote four essays upon various subjects, such as the creation of the human soul, matter and form, the origin of ideas, etc.,

* Price 6d. Washbourne, and Art and Book Co., Leamington.

† "The Philosopher of Rovereto." Burns and Oates. Price 6d.

which in language of singular clearness and force brought the Church's teaching on these abstruse subjects within the range of any cultivated understanding. The first was published in *The Month*, as well as a later one called "Given a First Cause, what then?" At the urgent request of a lady all five were embodied by him, somewhat extended and revised, in his last novel, *The Ban of Maplethorpe*.

In order to feel quite sure of his ground, he had previously translated the essays into Italian, and sent them for approval or correction (if there should be anything to correct) to his master in scholastic philosophy, Father Liberatore, who returned them with emphatic commendation and without one correction.

Likewise, before publishing *The Philosopher of Rovereto*, Mr. Dering translated it into Italian, and sent it for correction to Father Liberatore, who, in reply, wrote as follows :

Onoratissimo Signore,

Bravo, bravissimo! Ho letto il suo articolo, e non si è trovato neppure una sillaba che meritasse correzione. Per contrario, vi ho trovato piena cognizione della dottrina di San Tommaso ; lucidissimo ordine ; robustezza d'argomentazione, in somma tutti pregi che si vogliono in una discussione scientifica.

È mirabile osservare, che benchè si tratta di cose difficilissime, ella le ha ridotta a gran facilità, sicchè il pubblico, anche neofite, questa volta non troverà difficoltà a comprendere. Ho restituito il manuscritto al Signor Alfredo Newdigate ; (cortesissimo signore, il quale ha il volto del predestinato) ma ella può stamparlo fin d'ora, perchè, come ho detto, non ho trovato emendibile, neppure una virgola.

Non so se ella abbia letto i miei articoli contro Monsignor Ferré, ossia contro la Filosofia del Rosmini, inserite nel

periodico L'Accademia Romana di San Tommaso ; i quali furono da me scritti per volontà del Santo Padre. Io li raccolsi poscia in un sol volume. Io non so se nell' amministrazione della Civiltà Cattolica gli conservi già alcuna copia del detto volume ; ma certo io non ne ho neppure ; altrimenti io glielo manderei. Conservo solo alcune copie del primo articolo e di queste gliene mando una per posta. Se questi articoli si ristampassero in Inglese, forse il pubblico più facilmente li capirebbe, che non il dottissimo e grosso volume del Padre Cornoldi. Mi sarebbe grato se ella schiettamente e da amico mi manifestasse il suo giudizio sopra gli articoli di Economia Politica che stampo nella Civiltà Cattolica ; di altra materia fra essa la Teoria di Riccardo sull'origine della rendita. Mi congratulo colla sua Signora per l'ingegno filosofico che manifesta. Si ricordi di me nelle sue orazioni e mi creda suo affez^{mo} servo.

M. Liberatore, C.D.G.

Rome, 25 Gen., 1888, Via Rippetta 246.

In compliance with the wish expressed by Father Liberatore, Mr. Dering sent for a copy of the book against Monsignor Ferré, and began to translate it. Father Liberatore named his book *Degli Universalì*, and consequently the translation with the same title, *On Universals*, was published by the Art and Book Co.* It received the approval of the learned in England and Italy,—among the most distinguished, that of the venerable Prelate, Dr. Ullathorne, Archbishop of Cabasa.

The death of the Archbishop, which occurred in the following year, (on the 21st March, 1890,) was nowhere more deeply felt than at Baddesley Clinton, where he had been a frequent and honoured guest, his visits being always looked forward to by its inmates as one of their greatest pleasures.

* Leamington, 1889.

The *Civiltà Cattolica* spoke of the translation of *On Universals* as follows :

È un'elegante traduzione inglese dei sette opuscoli, scritti dal P. Matteo Liberatore della Comp^a di Gesù, in risposta a Mons. Ferré, il quale aveva preso a patrocinare la dottrina filosofica e teologica del Rosmini. Nei detti opuscoli si trova una piena confutazione della medesima, ed essi possono quasi valere di commento alla condanna delle quaranta proposizioni rosminiane, fatta dalla Sacra Congregazione del Santo Uffizio. Il Sig. Dering, che in varii suoi scritti si era mostrato conoscitissimo della dottrina di San Tommaso e di quello del Rosmini, ha fatto opera molto lodevole ed ha ben meritato da suoi connazionali, aiutandoli a ravvisare la fiera opposizione che passa tra la prima e la seconda.

On receiving a copy of *On Universals* Father Liberatore wrote as follows :

Onoratissimo Signore,

Tornato a Roma da Napoli, dove mi son trattenuto per circa un mese, ho trovato sul mio tavolino la magnifica copia della sua traduzione degli Universal, che ella ha avuto la bontà di regalarmi. Gliene rendo infinite grazie. È venuto veramente un bel libro, edizione complitissima, con tutta la delicatezza dell' arte Inglese, che suol essere perfetta. Mi congratulo con lei assai, assai. Mi dispiace di non sapere la lingua Inglese per gustarne l'eleganza della traduzione, ma la farò leggere a due miei compagni che sanno leggere questa lingua perfettamente.

Se ella crede, sarebbe bene che ella mandasse una copia al Santo Padre Leone XIII., accompagnandolo con una sua lettera, in cui accenasse il suo amore per la dottrina di S. Tommaso, e quella altresì della sua Signora "Tomista arrabbiata" (come ella si esprime meco); io potrei incaricarmi di farlo presentare al S. Padre. Pensi a ciò, che mi sembra un eccellente

pensiero. La lettera potrebbe scriverla in Italiano. Mandi a me la detta copia e la detta lettera, ed io penserò al resto. Torna a ringraziarle del regalo della copia e della fatica sostenuta. Spero che Iddio glielo darà la guiderdone, e benedica l'effetto della medesima. Mi riverisca la sua Signora, e mi crede,

Suo affezionissimo servo,

Ed amico,

Roma, 19 Agosta, 1889.

Matteo Liberatore, C.D.G.

Naturally, with inexpressible eagerness, Mr. Dering took advantage of the "eccellente pensiero," and of the kindness which dictated it. He had a copy of *On Universals* and of *The Philosopher of Rovereto* richly bound, emblazoned with the Papal arms, and forwarded to Father Liberatore, who, obtaining an audience, presented them in person. This event he describes in the following letter :

Mio carissimo amico,

Jeri sono stato dal Santo Padre e gli ho presentato i suoi libri e la sua lettera. Il Santo Padre ha raccolto con somma benevolenza gli uni e l'altra. Mi ha detto che era molto contento che in Inghilterra si stampassero cotali libri giacchè ivi si cercava diffondere la dottrina Rosminiana, e si cercava di vendere i libri del medesimo anche in America. Mi soggiunse che avrebbe letto la sua lettera, ed avrebbe veduto si convenisse che egli vi facesse una risposta, ma volle primo sapere da me che io era certo che ella fosse buon cattolico. Gli rispose che son certissimo che ella non solo è buon Cattolico, ma pio e fervente Cattolico. In fine diede a lei e alla sua Signora la sua benedizione. Ringraziamo dunque Iddio ; la cosa è andata benissimo. Il Santo Padre ne rimase molto contento.

Mi riverisca la sua Signora di cui dissi al S. Padre di avere essa dipinto le sue armi sui libri.

Si ricordi di me talvolta nelle sue orazioni.

Sua affez^{mo} servo,

M. Liberatore, C.D.G.

Roma, 21 Sett., 1889.

A few days later Father Liberatore wrote that he had seen the private secretary of His Holiness, and had asked him to remind the Holy Father of his promise made *spontaneamente* to honour Mr. Dering with an answer to his letter. The private secretary assured Father Liberatore that the Holy Father had spoken to him, of his own accord, about this translation, expressing the "great satisfaction" it had given him, and said that the Holy Father had added, "I should like to do something for him"—"Convieni che io faccia qualche cosa per lui."

On receiving from Father Liberatore the letter containing these gracious words, Mr. Dering wrote immediately to say that the dearest wish of his heart was that the adorable Sacrament should be brought back to the old Catholic house at Baddesley Clinton, which had never belonged to a Protestant owner, and be reserved once more in its private chapel, as in the days of old.

The Bishop of Birmingham graciously wrote a letter supporting Mr. Dering's request, whereupon Father Liberatore wrote as follows:

Onoratissimo e carissimo amico,

Godo che ella sia rimessa in salute. Non si maraviglia del sentirsi ancor debole; perchè è questo l'effetto dell' influenza — lasciare una grande debolezza.

Come le scrissi, io feci tradurre in Italiano la lettera del Vescovo di Birmingham, che mostrai a Monsignor Angeli, segretario privato del Papa, acciò la facesse sentire al Santo

Padre. Or egli mi ha detto che il Santo Padre nel sentirla, disse: "Ebbene per questo Signore farò io quello che occorre; farò da me stesso, senza che si sia bisogno di recorsene alle congregazione."

Speriamo dunque che ella sia contentata. Poi in là, se non vediamo nulla, pregherò Monsr Angeli che richiami la cosa alla memoria del Santo Padre. Mi riverisca la sua Signora, e si ricordi talvolta di me nelle sue orazioni.

Suo affezmo servo,

M. Liberatore, C.D.G.

Roma, 14 Febr., 1890.

It was not until four months later, (the Holy Father having been, as his private secretary assured Father Liberatore, greatly occupied with most important affairs,) that the long desired permission, previously granted, arrived in its official form.

On Wednesday, the 25th of June, 1890, a few days after the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Our Lord, the Rescript arrived from the Holy Father.

On the Feast of the^{*}Precious Blood, the 6th of July following, the Blessed Sacrament was reserved for the first time in the domestic chapel at Baddesley Clinton, after an interregnum of over seventy years. Mass was said and the Blessed Sacrament placed in the tabernacle by the Right Reverend Dr. Edmund Knight, Bishop of Shrewsbury. The iron tabernacle, gilt and decorated, as well as the silver sanctuary lamp, were the gift of the Rev. Father Kelly, of Warwick, who had come, as an act of pure friendship, every week for fifteen years, to say a weekly Mass in the chapel.

This completes a great era in Mr. Dering's life. It had been the wish of his heart for years, but was a boon so great that until he received the gracious words, "Convien ch'io faccia qualche cosa per lui," he never dreamed of the possibility of its realisation.

On the 14th of the preceding March that year (1890), Father Liberatore had suggested to Mr. Dering to translate his work on Political Economy ; which he accordingly did, and on receiving a copy Father Liberatore wrote :

Onoratissimo Signore, ed amico carissimo,

Da alcuni giorni ho ricevuto la copia della sua bellissima traduzione. La ringrazio immensamente. La stampa è eccellente. Ottimi tipi, ottima carta, ottima legatura. La ringrazio di bel nuovo. Io non so la lingua Inglese. Ma ho dato a leggere la traduzione a un padre che conosce a fondo l'inglese e mi assicura che la traduzione non poteva essere migliore. Ella è elegantissima. Di nuovo grazie. Il detto padre mi assicuro che in America, dov' egli è stato per 14 anni, cotesta traduzione avrà molto spaccio. Speriamo che ciò si avverrà. Io la raccomanderò al Signore. Mi riverisca la sua collega, ed accolga i miei ossequii.

Suo affez^{mo} servo ed amico,

M. Liberatore, C.D.G.

Roma, 6 Ott., 1891.

In the winter of 1891, some friends begged Mr. Dering to write for a little Conservative Magazine, which he accordingly did. The following parody, if it may be called so, on the *Needy Knife Grinder*, which greatly touched and pleased Father Kelly, was never printed.

SAPPHIC VERSE.

*O fortunatos nimium, sua si bona nôrint,
Agricolas !*

VIRGIL, G. ii. 2.

Mr. Lowprice.

“ Worthy bucolic, glad I am to see you,
Long is it since we had a glass together.
Once only, have I seen you in the distance

Driving the missus.”

Mr. Stubbles.

“ Driving the missus? Yes, indeed I was, Sir,
Home from a sale with little in my pocket,
When the roan mare fell down and threw her out, where
Stood the old turnpike.”

Mr. Lowprice.

“ Pikes we have done with, or you would have had to
Pay for the tumble fourpence to the pikeman.
How fared the roan, the harness and the shafts? and—
How is the missus?”

Mr. Stubbles.

“ Thrown on the road, she broke her collar-bone, Sir,
Sprained her right ankle, got rheumatic fever.
Health as before she never has enjoyed, since
Michaelmas twelvemonth.”

Mr. Lowprice.

“ Much do I grieve at hearing of your troubles :
Illness, I know, is painful and expensive.
But, for your comfort, think that you have got off
Paying the pikeman.”

Mr. Stubbles.

“ Pikes kept the road by payments from its users.
Now must the parish keep it for the townsmen.
Old men and cripples got an honest living,
Keeping a turnpike.

“ These (as *you* know, who get the roads for nothing)
Lost, with their pikes, the means of their subsistence.
Rates pay the cost, while brakes and brewers' dray-carts
Wear out the road, Sir.

“ Rates pay the cost, for you to bring your goods on
Roads never used by many of the payers ;
You save your pence, but many a poor pikeman
Went to the workhouse.

“ *We* have to pay, and not alone for that, Sir ;
Fair play to land is never even thought of.
You buy our bags of wheat for ten and sixpence
Or for twelve shillings.

“Twelve shillings—yes ; I *should* be glad to see you
 Sell at that price and balance your expenses.
 What a long face you'd pull, whenever you were looking
 Hard for the profits !

“Don't talk to me, but hurry back to business.
 Land, as you think, will never much concern you.
 Buy frozen beef and bacon from Chicago,
 Cured on the passage.

“Love your low prices, you who cannot see that
 Cheapness depends on getting what you pay for.
 Ruin your country, thinking to get rich by
 Low competition.

“Help to break down the landlord and the tenant.
 Never can you harm, Sir, the one without the other.
 Land is now depressed, but one of these fine days, you'll
 Find what 'tis worth, Sir.”

A copy of Political Economy in its English dress, also bound in white and gold and emblazoned with the papal arms, was, at Mr. Dering's request, presented to the Holy Father by the Bishop of Portsmouth. The Bishop wrote : “I had a most delightful half hour with him, and duly presented the book and letter, which *he said he would reply to.*”

No doubt this precious reply would have been received, had the Translator lived long enough afterwards to receive it. This letter was received in or about February, 1892, and before that year had closed its chequered career, the beautiful soul of Edward Dering passed to its reward.

In the March of that year, the family at Baddesley had to suffer a great sorrow and loss in the death of Father Kelly, the priest of Warwick, already mentioned in these pages—a most dear friend and frequent guest, who for many years had said the weekly Mass in the domestic chapel. He had been looked upon as one of the family, and his loss made a void that never could be filled.

Shortly before this, Father Cornoldi's articles in the

Civiltà Cattolica had attracted Mr. Dering's admiration; and he enquired from Father Liberatore whether the author would like them translated. A few autograph lines from Father Cornoldi himself expressed his pleasure at the proposal, and his conviction that an English translation would do great good in England and America.

The two years of 1891-2 were occupied in the composition of *The Ban of Maplethorpe*, and in the translation of Father Cornoldi's treatise, which is published by the Art and Book Co. under the title of *The Physical System of St. Thomas*.

There is little more to add. A very bad attack of influenza, from which Mr. Dering suffered in June, 1891, must have, as in many other cases, laid the foundation of heart disease, unsuspected even by the doctor.

A quotation from a letter written to a very dear friend, by his widow, will tell the rest.

Baddesley Clinton,
December 8th, 1892.

My dear

I know not how to thank you enough for the consolation of your letter, for your sympathy with me in my immense loss (loss indeed, for I am nothing without him,) and for the Masses and prayers which in your great kindness you have said for him and for me. Almighty God has been very good to me in enabling me to bear a cross which, had I known or thought of beforehand, would have seemed unendurable. Mr. Dering's death was beautiful as his life. His attack of pain and faintness (which the doctor told me afterwards was angina pectoris) came on first at the early Mass in the convent church on Thursday, and he had to leave the church. I was not there, but my niece Mrs. Ferrers was, and he walked home with her. He seemed well the rest of the day, and attributed the attack to indigestion. The next day he and I went to the

church to receive Holy Communion together. He went, as the nuns afterwards said, to receive his own viaticum. He was not well on Sunday morning, and I sent for the doctor, but it appeared to be only a liver derangement. He could not go to Mass, and on Monday, the feast of the Presentation, he wanted very much to walk off to the early Mass at the convent, but I would not allow him, because it was so cold. He seemed quite bright and well that day, and sat up late to put the last words, completing his novel. On Tuesday morning, when he got up at seven, he complained of the pain in his chest and shoulder being bad again, and walked about the room evidently in great pain, but saying the Rosary, until he had finished the first chaplet. Then he said, he thought he must lie down on the bed, for the pain was so severe that he was in a cold perspiration all over. Seeing my distress, he said, "It is all right my Pearl"—(this was his usual undeserved name for me). Those words reassured me, and I covered him up with cloaks. Presently he sat up and asked for a cup of tea that the servants had brought. As I gave it to him, he said, "This pain is so distressing that all I can do is to offer it to God for my sins. That is the great consolation of being a Catholic, isn't it?" Even then I was not frightened. Then he asked me to give him his rosary: and those were his last dear words. I put it into his hand. He lay down, and I covered him again with the cloaks. A few minutes afterwards I heard him breathing heavily. I tried to raise him, but could not. I rang for the servants, who helped me to raise him; and as I held him in my arms, his pure soul passed into Life—I did not know when. I thought he had only fainted. Then my niece came in, and after that I heard them whisper to one another, "He is gone." I was as one dazed. Then the Priest came, but I know not when, I have lost all count of time that day. I believe it was a very little while after Mass, and that he came with astonishing quickness.

I trust these few details may be interesting, about one who loved and admired you truly.

How true are the words that you said of him, "He was no ordinary Catholic!" He aimed after the heroic, as it is called, though he always declaimed against its being heroic to him, for he always considered it but the bare duty of a Catholic, as he saw it.

. . . . Seven days afterwards he was borne to his last earthly resting place, surrounded by many of the friends he loved best, and to whom he owed most—foremost among them Father Wyndham, Mr. Alfred Newdigate, Father Norris, etc., and Father Alphonsus Morrall, O.S.B.,—the latter many years his spiritual director, to whom he used to submit his novels before publication, to ensure that no word contrary to theology should creep in. The extern sisters from the convent, his faithful servants, and his sorrowing widow all bore witness that, up to the last sight of him, no change marred the beauty of his calm alabaster-like features, as he lay in his coffin, clothed in the brown habit and cord of a tertiary of St. Francis, his hands crossed on his breast and his beloved rosary twined round his fingers. Daily for many years, he had made the dedication of himself to Our Blessed Lady: and had said the whole rosary; and his constant ejaculation was, *Domina mea, Mater mea, memento me esse tuum. Serva me, defende me, ut rem et possessionem tuam.*

On Sunday afternoon the coffin was carried into the chapel and placed under Her picture. That picture was painted after *Sassoferrato*, by Georgiana Lady Chatterton, and indulgenced by Dr. Ullathorne when Bishop of Birmingham.

The ceremony of the following day is thus described by the *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, Nov. 29th, 1892.

“FUNERAL OF MR. E. H. DERING, OF
BADDESLEY CLINTON.

“AMID the solemn pomp, and with all the sacred rites of the faith to which he was such a devoted adherent, the remains of Mr. Edward Heneage Dering, Lord of the Manor of Baddesley Clinton, Knowle, Warwickshire, were laid to rest yesterday in the little burial ground attached to the Roman Catholic mission at Baddesley. The church, so artistically and lavishly decorated by the hand of Mrs. Dering herself, was crowded to its utmost limits, and there were many anxious to pay their last tribute to the memory of a kind friend and liberal landlord, who were unable to gain admission. Amongst the clergy assisting were the Right Rev. the Bishop of Birmingham (Bishop Ilsley), the Right Rev. Monsignor Souter (Kenilworth), the Very Rev. Father Wyndham (superior of the Oblates of St. Charles, London), the Very Rev. Father Rudolph and the Rev. Father Leo (Franciscan Monastery, Olton), Rev. Dr. McCarten (Walsall), the Very Rev. Alphonsus Morrall (Downside), the Revs. E. C. Delaney (priest of the Mission at Baddesley), Henry Norris (Tamworth), Hugh Taylor (Southam), A. Hall (Warwick), J. Nary (Leamington), W. Hanley (Leamington), J. Daly (Hampton), J. Holden (Wappenbury), P. McCabe (Wootton Wawen), A. Doyle (Avon Dassett), Hugh McCarten (Lichfield), &c. Others present included Mr. Broughton Dugdale (of Wroxall Abbey), Mr. Ramsden (of Chadwick Manor), Mr. W. R. Ludlow, Mr. G. P. Warren, Mr. C. Johnson, Mr. W. Tibbets, Mr. T. Satchwell, Mr. V. Bower, Mr. E. M. Pearson, Mr. S. Brierley, Mr. T. B. Ward, Mr. W. H. Margetts, &c. The chief mourners were Mr. Heneage E. B. Harrison, Major Cholmeley Harrison, and Mr. Thurlow D. Harrison (nephews of the deceased), Mr.

Ferrers (heir to Baddesley Clinton), and Mrs. Ferrers ; and amongst others from the hall were the Hon. Mrs. Kavanagh, Miss Kavanagh, Mr. A. Newdigate, and Miss Nee, with Mr. William Herbert, and Mr. and Mrs. Blake, as representing the oldest servants on the estate. Mrs. Dering, the widow, was not present at the burial ; but prior to the service in the church, Mass was twice said in the private chapel at Baddesley Hall—by the Right Rev. the Bishop of Birmingham and by the Very Rev. Father Wyndham—at which Mrs. Dering and the members of the family attended. The coffin was of plain oak with solid brass furniture, and it bore a plate with the simple inscription, “Edward Heneage Dering, born March 15th, 1827, died November 22nd, 1892.” It was carried by six of the oldest tenants on the estate—Messrs. Peter, John, and Joseph Harrison, J. Weetman, Henry Morris, and John Onions. A large number of beautiful wreaths were sent, including one from the Ferrers Habitation of the Primrose League, but in accordance with the rubric of the Roman Church they were not placed upon the coffin. The service was a full Requiem Mass, and it was impressively sung by the Rev. E. C. Delaney, the Deacon being the Very Rev. Alphonsus Morrall, the Sub-deacon the Rev. Hugh Taylor, and the Master of Ceremonies the Rev. A. Hall. In the sanctuary were the Right Rev. Bishop of Birmingham, the Right Rev. Monsignor Souter, the Rev. J. Nary, the Rev. W. Hanley, and the Rev. J. Daly. The chant (Mechlin) was sung by the clergy present, the cantors being the Rev. Hugh McCarten and the Rev. W. Hanley. The Absolutions were given by Bishop Ilsley, who also conducted the burial service at the grave, which was dug between those of Lady Chatterton (deceased’s first wife) and Mr. Marmion Edward Ferrers (Mrs. Dering’s first husband). Masters Bernard and Cecil Ferrers—the little sons of Mr. Ferrers, the heir of Baddesley—took part in the service as acolytes.”

The *Tablet* of December 3rd, 1892, gives the sermon preached on that day, the 27th, and on the preceding Sunday, as follows :

“ On Sunday, November 26, the Rev. E. C. Delaney alluded in his sermon at High Mass to the death of Mr. Edward Heneage Dering, who had died on the morning of the preceding Tuesday, November 22. After exhorting his congregation to penance in accordance with the spirit of Advent, he said :

“ ‘ It is a matter of duty and of friendship and of love for me to speak a few words on the subject which I am sure is in all your minds. If I were to say all that I feel, it would be a great deal, but there are times when the tongue fails to express all that the heart feels. Edward Heneage Dering was in the true sense a just man, that is, a holy man, he was a faithful friend, a loving husband, and a kind master, gentle and generous. No one had more zeal for the honour of the Church and for the Holy Father. But God only knows the full extent of a man’s goodness ; the secrets of his heart, the many little acts of virtue are known to God alone.

“ ‘ He showed his faith by his great devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and to Our Lady ; to the Blessed Sacrament by his constant attendance at Mass—nothing pleased him more than to have the privilege of serving the priest at Mass,—also by his frequent communions. Several times in the week he knelt here at the altar to receive Our Lord. And on his way to and from Mass he used to say the rosary. He also loved to be with priests and talk to them on matters of religion, which he had so much at heart. He spent the last years of his life in the study of Catholic philosophy and theology, especially of the great theologian St. Thomas, for whom he had a great devotion. He wished, as he said, “ in his own little way, to do what he

could for religion." God's ways are not our ways, and though we may wonder that one who was so constant in the practice of religion, did not have the consolations of religion at the last, He knows what is best. It is often those who are well prepared who do not; it has become proverbial that priests so often die without the last Sacraments. No doubt it is that they who have led holy lives and have been an example to others, should even in death be still an example, and show it by their preparedness for a sudden call.

"Many of you, I daresay, can hardly realize that you will never meet him again going to and from the church. But you must try and imitate the holiness of his life. Most of you have something to thank him for—even unknown to yourselves you have very likely profited by his example. In return you must pray for him. Though we may see no stain of sin, we do not know God's ways, and before him even the cherubim bow down and are not pure. There is nothing contrary to one's idea of the goodness of a man in praying for him, indeed it would not be charity not to pray.

"Imitate him, then, in his life, that if you are suddenly called upon, you may be prepared as he was."

"On Monday, the 28th, the High Mass of Requiem was celebrated in Baddesley Clinton Church, and at the conclusion of the Mass a sermon was preached by the Very Rev. F. Wyndham, Superior of the Oblates of St. Charles, Bayswater, taking as his text, *St. Luke, xii. 38*: 'And if he shall come in the second watch, or if he shall come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants.' He said:

"We are gathered together to pray for the soul of one who for many years past has knelt almost daily in this church at the adorable sacrifice of the Mass—to pray for one who

within these walls has been constant in his prayers for those who had gone before him. The charity which he thus poured out upon others it is fitting that we should be prompt and zealous in extending to himself. His mortal remains lie there before us ; his soul has already appeared before the judgment-seat of God. What the sentence has been we are not told. God in his wisdom hides this from us. Perhaps thereby He keeps us at one time from despair, at another from presumption. But He has given us an intellect which is a participation of His own Infinite intelligence. And if from true premises we proceed according to right reason, we without doubt reach a conclusion in harmony with the mind of God. There are times when the premises are such that we would fain throw a veil over them and when we flinch from the deductions of reason ; yet even so we pass no decision—judgment belongs to God alone. But on this occasion we have reason to be filled with every good hope and consolation. For more than thirty years I have enjoyed his intimate friendship ; you, whose homes are here, know what his life has been. When, by the goodness of God, he received the light of faith, he embraced the full faith taught by the Catholic Church, with all his heart and soul. Accepting the teaching of the Catholic Church as implicitly containing the whole revelation of God, his constant aim was by incessant study to obtain a more complete knowledge of this revelation, and in the words of the book of Wisdom to gain “a true knowledge of the things that are.” To acquire for himself a fuller understanding of divine things and, according to his abilities and opportunities, to promote by his writings this fuller knowledge in others—this was the aim of his life as a student. Thus his whole intellectual life was directed and offered to Almighty God. And to prayer—that greatest of all means of divine illumination—he had unceasing recourse. You have seen him kneel here,

day after day, at the holy Mass—the rosary was ever in his hands as he walked hither and home again. Varied as we are in character and disposition, so death comes to almost each one at a different time and in a different manner—to one in the second watch, to another in the third watch. One person lies for months on a bed of sickness ; another, who is fresh in our memories, is swept away by the waves of the sea, or perishes in the fearful crash of a railway train. To him for whom we pray, death came in its own way. On Tuesday morning he felt an acute pain. He lay down for a little while ; then he rose and walked to and fro saying his rosary. The pain returning with increased violence, constrained him to lie down once more. “It is happiness,” he said, “to offer this suffering to Almighty God for all the sins of my past life.” He said no more, and in a few minutes he had ceased to breathe. He died indeed without the consolation of the last Sacraments. But his life had been for God, and prayer and contrition were on his lips as he passed away. “If He come in the second watch or come in the third, and find them so, blessed are those servants.” Thirty-two years ago, how little did I think that I should be addressing you on the present occasion ! Those years seem like a dream ; thirty years are a long time to look forward to, a short time to look back upon. When we, in our turn, shall stand before the judgment-seat of God, if we have lived according to our fancies, pleasures and passions, how we shall hate the brief time so spent ! and if we shall hear the words, “Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord,” how we shall deem whatever we may have done for God as all too small in proportion to the great reward that God shall bestow ! Pray for the soul of him who has gone before us ; pray for yourselves, that you may lead a good life ; pray that you may die a good death.’”

Another sermon was preached in Warwick on the same Sunday by the Rev. Alfred Hall, which gives such a true

and beautiful epitome of the life feebly portrayed in these pages, that a *résumé* of it must be inserted here. It will come with greater force, when it is known that it was spoken from the pulpit by the reverend preacher solely for the benefit of his flock, and he was not aware that it would ever even be heard of by any of the sorrowing family at Baddesley Clinton. He took for his text a verse from the Gospel of the day. "When these things begin to come to pass, lift up your heads."

"To-day," he said, "the Church begins her new year. She begins it as she ended it on Sunday last, by reminding us of the terrors of God's judgments. In this she follows the example of God Himself, Who filled the Jews with fear when giving the Law to Moses—a God Who punishes as well as rewards.

"Many think the last judgment far off—hence are indifferent and heedless. But have we not in our midst frequent reminders of the judgment to come?" (Here he enumerated several instances of sudden death in the congregation and neighbourhood since he had come to Warwick.) "To-day I would say a few words concerning one whose death everyone present has reason to regret—I mean Edward Heneage Dering.

"You may ask perhaps, why I should speak of him to you?—I do so, because he was once a member of this congregation—and, I am told, a member, for a time, of the choir. He always took a deep and personal interest in all that concerned this Mission: and I may here add that, were it not for the assistance I at present receive from the family at Baddesley Clinton, I fear that I should be compelled, though reluctantly, to ask the Bishop to accept my resignation; as I could not possibly live on the income of the Mission apart from their help. He has then, a claim on our prayers—not only in charity, but in justice, as our benefactor.

"A further reason why I should speak of him is, that his

life was full of instruction—an example to every Catholic. The son of a clergyman of the Established Church, he was educated for the army. Such a life was unsuited to him; he devoted himself to art and literature, and having an upright mind—one fearing God, hence under the influence of grace—he found his way into the True Fold of Christ.

“In thanksgiving for such a grace, he prized it above all things, and was resolved to promote to the best of his ability the cause of Truth. Endowed with many gifts—above all, a thinker—how could he help others best?—it was his desire to do so. He would write a novel and let the heroes and heroines speak Catholic doctrines. His books were at first well received and favourably reviewed; but as soon as the general public realized his aim, they resented his teaching. He was not dismayed, and absolutely declined to write merely to tickle the shallow and unthinking minds of the men and women of the nineteenth century. He wished to educate—not merely to amuse. Later he wrote many able articles for Catholic periodicals. Believing the great want in England to be a knowledge of true Catholic Philosophy, he determined to do for England what his friends Liberatore and Cornoldi were doing for Italy—that is, to popularize the teaching of St. Thomas, the great Doctor of the Church; and few men living were better acquainted with the writing of St. Thomas, than was Edward Heneage Dering.

“He came to Baddesley Clinton. Now the Ferrers’s of Baddesley Clinton are one of the most ancient families in the land, were once one of the wealthiest, and were in the past, as now, ever devoted and loyal to the ancient Faith. But this loyalty resulted in their being heavily fined—their lands for the most part confiscated—their church even handed over to those of the new religion. And although the penalty was death for all concerned, a domestic chapel existed in secret and Mass was said there constantly all

through those dreadful times of persecution. And, to this day, the Priest vests for Mass standing on a trap door that gives access to a passage by which his predecessors were enabled to escape in times of danger.

“An estate, with such a history of fines, confiscation and persecution suffered for the Catholic Faith, had naturally a charm for one so gifted and so Catholic as Edward Heneage Dering; and had it been necessary, he would, I am sure, have been ready to sacrifice all he had in order to hand down to posterity intact the present glory of that estate,—namely, that it has never known a Protestant owner. His zeal, too, for the welfare of the Convent of the Poor Clares, whom he esteemed it a special honour to have upon his estate, cost him many a personal sacrifice, which I am persuaded is known to God alone.

“His tenants were treated with a consideration that only members of a family have a right to expect, and it was he who, rather than they, had many times to suffer the hardships arising from agricultural depression. His kind and courteous consideration of his domestic servants could not fail to attract the attention of his visitors.

“If he declined, as he did, except occasionally, to entertain his neighbours, who held an invitation to Baddesley as a great pleasure, he did so for the sole reason that he might have more to bestow in charity.

“His religion and piety, may I say it, were rarely more conspicuous than when entertaining a priest—the first to greet, the last to say adieu. And so long as a priest was his guest, so long was he content to be his servant—to such an extent indeed that I, like others, have felt at times embarrassed at the reverence he displayed for our high office.

“In private life, the world and its vanities and its judgments had no concern for him. He stood apart and lived by Faith,—a thorough student, with great refinement of

mind, a devoted friend, 'thinking no evil,' above all and in all a practical Catholic—labouring for his Church and its interests, an ardent admirer of the present Holy Father and of all that he said and did.

"When Mass was not said at the Hall, he would walk, all weathers, to the convent—a distance of more than a mile. There he would not only hear but serve the Mass, and thought it an honour to be allowed to do so. If Mass was at the Hall, he was always the server. His hands both prepared and put away what was required at the altar.

"The order of his day included meditation, the fifteen decades of the rosary, and frequent visits to the Blessed Sacrament in the domestic Chapel. What terror could sudden death have for one whose life was such as this? Yes, his was sudden but, thank God, not an unprovided death. I know no one so ready to give unexpectedly an account of his stewardship."

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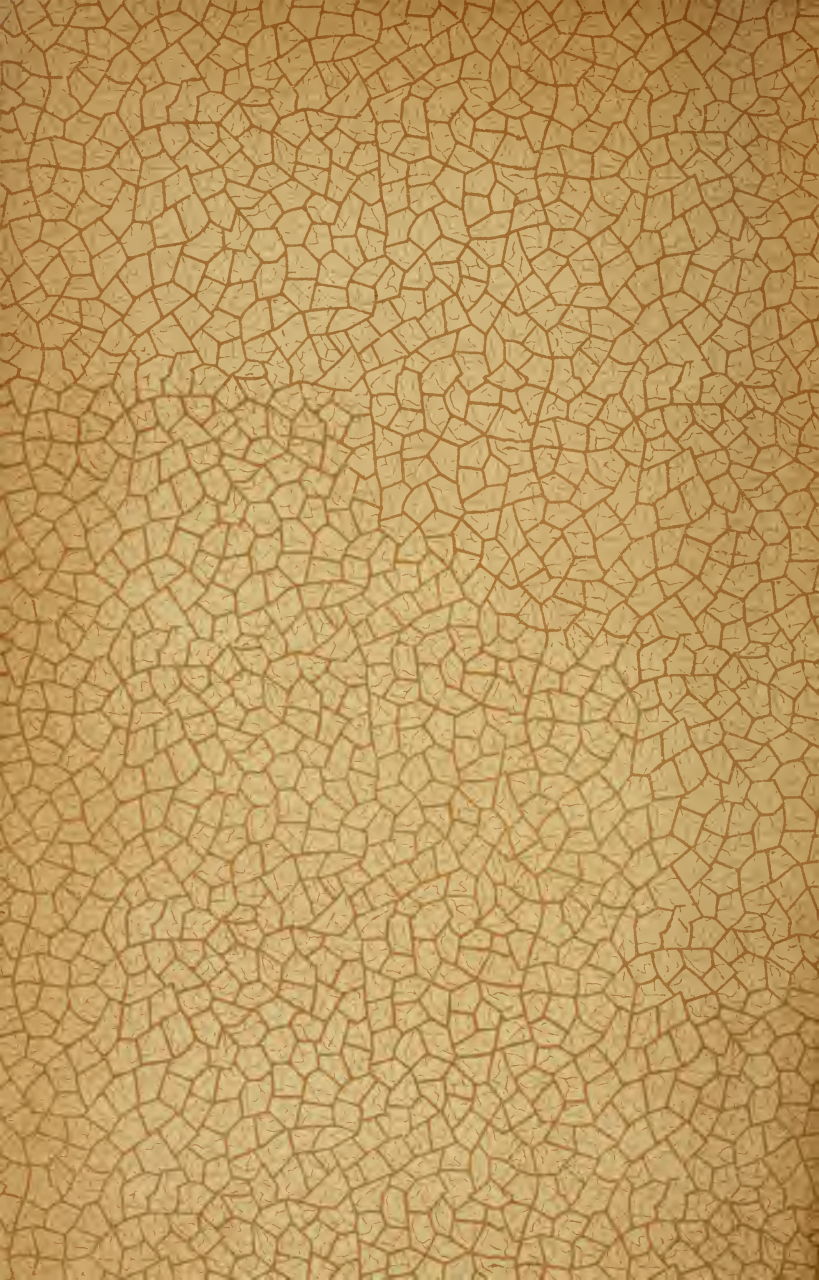
But the good works of the holy dead not only precede ; they follow also, and bring forth fruit. The *Physical System of St. Thomas*, which saw the light early in this year, is doing its work after the translator has passed from amongst us. Many copies have already been ordered from America, and congratulatory letters have been received by the editors, praising not only the translation itself, but its opportuneness, from heads of colleges and professors of philosophy in episcopal Seminaries.

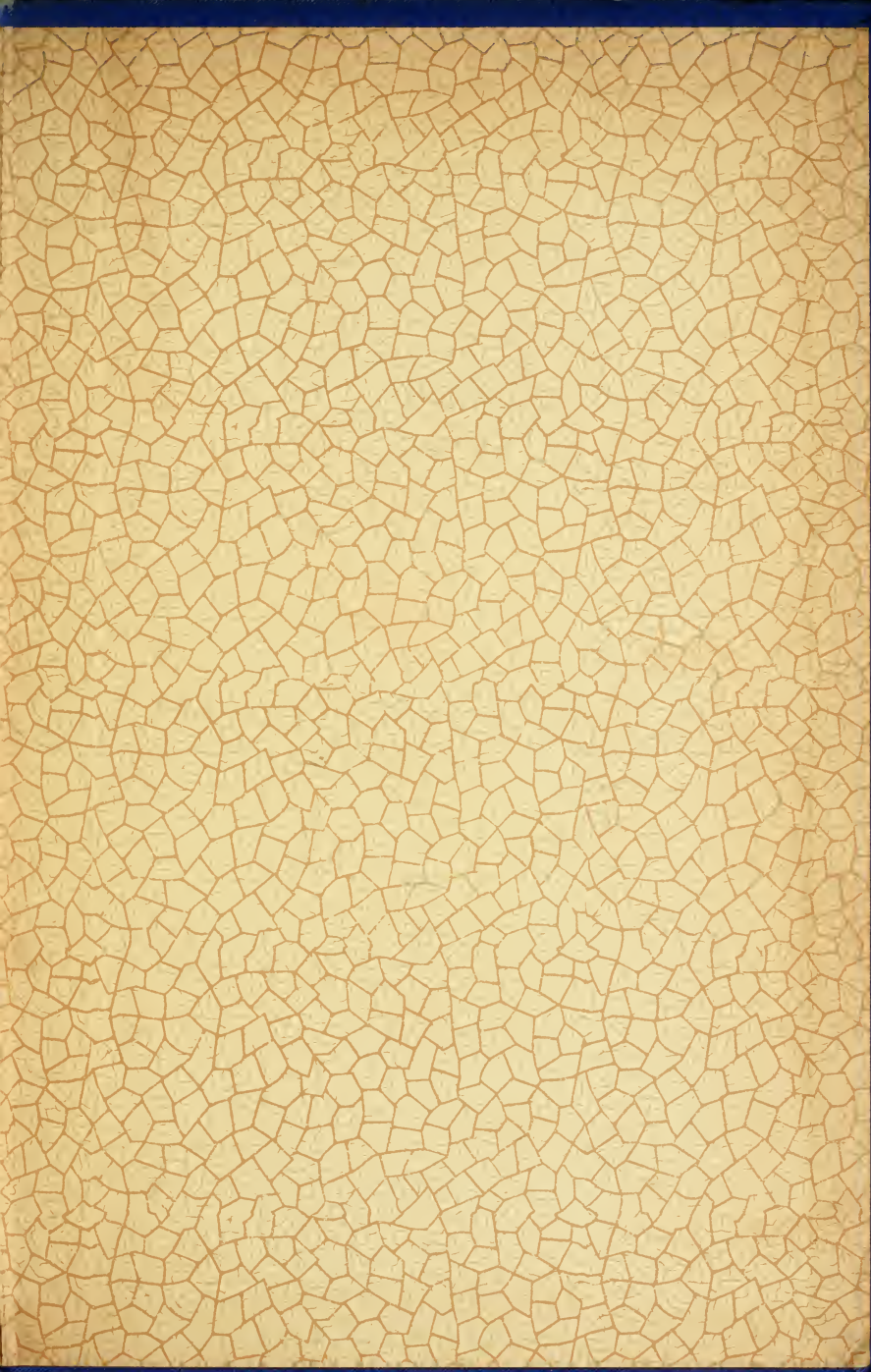
A Catholic Squire of that highest type, so seldom to be found in the world of to-day, wrote about Mr. Dering as follows, on receiving a copy of the *Physical System*, July 3rd, 1893 : "There are some persons whom, one feels, one can never forget, and he was one of them—so sound, so true, as if he had belonged to a stronger age. His memory seems one of the many blessings of my life."

The following letter, quoted by permission, from his Lordship the Bishop of Birmingham, on receiving a copy of the *Physical System*, is placed here by the Editors of this book, as the crowning point and completion—the seal, as it were, to this brief record of a saintly life. His Lordship wrote as follows :

Accept my sincere thanks for the beautiful book. Dr. Schobel and Dr. McIntyre have both glanced through it and have expressed their satisfaction that it has been brought out in English. To me it is doubly interesting: firstly, for the fact that sound philosophy has thus been brought within reach of sincere searchers after truth; and then, that this esteemed service has been rendered by one who has by this, and by his previous works, shed lustre upon the diocese which is proud to have his name inscribed on the roll of her distinguished sons. The record at the beginning of the book is one of deep and pathetic interest; it will serve to remind us to pray for the faithful ones departed.

REQUIEM ÆTERNAM DONA EI, DOMINE;
ET LUX PERPETUA LUCEAT EI.





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